" Where there is no vision the people perish "

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The Poetry Review

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THE POETRY REVIEW

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INSTEAD OF TEARS

IN MEMORIAM for Officers and Men who went down on H.M.S. *Cossack*—"The Navy is Here"—and especially for Lieut. H. William Rose, R.N.

YOU have no foothold now on solid earth
The sky, the sea, the beating sea of tides
Sway with your multitudinous appeal,
And you escape the earth-bound common rule
Of earth to earth playing an earth-warmed part.
No flowers will spring from any clay you've used,
The dark sea holds what her cold fires have fused.
Earth burial means flowers spring from the heart
But the sea pastures are more strange and cool
Her phosphorescent ripples in life's wheel
Show beauty's iridescent changing sides
Darting from death to sensuous new birth.

Brown berried sea-wrack tangles round your throat
Its festive chaplets where no fresh wreathed flowers
Will reach you, and your resolute white limbs
Are draped with laminaria's crinkled strands
Swaying about the stillness of your thighs.
Your eyes are closed to all the hurrying fleet
Of fin-borne flocks darting between your feet.
Your breath gives no response to wave-swept sighs.
The pearl-sailed Nautilus curves to your hands.
Lucent green water takes the light and dims
Your lips now fading with the passing hours
That sang and laughed with an Elysian note.

Our grief for you, poignant, and personal
But crystallises woe for all our dead
In this foul war, that sprang upon the mind
Like nightmare fiend upon a sleeping man,
Whose head was pillowed on fair dreaming peace.
In secret, Evil sharped his horrid claws
To rend in tatters ancient free men's laws,
To shackle for all time with no release
Nations who marched in freedom's gallant van.
You were on guard, you and your noble kind
To take the blows on your symbolic head:
We owe to you a song-wreathed pedestal.

We cannot pay you till we cleanse the land
Of hydra-headed evil, near and far.
Young men seek truth, while old men are coerced
By circumstance and ties of craven fear.
We need your noble spirit in each sword:
Insolent allies come to teach hot hate
While opportunity stands at the gate
To conquer with clean vengeance of the Lord
And in cool justice steadfastly to rear
Life's standard that all evil be dispersed.
We will not drag, chained to a conquerer's car,
The erring brother with his blood stained hand.

Mothers of sons who that same day went down
May pride sustain you when your hearts are sore,
Pride that you mothered men who leaping, said
"The Navy's here" as *Cossack* grappled to
In line with Drake. Last visions of the brave
Upon a sinking deck must be your pride
Wherein your tears, your grief, not they, have died.
Your sons spring forward from their watery grave
To hold our ships that they may win straight through
The darkest night. Immortalised though dead
In this world you will meet your sons no more:
Think of the thorns upon the Saviour's crown.

No wife, no child, no song, ah, what is left?
All that was latent in you never now
Will smile upon earth's garland, and her dress
Lacks the rare blooms that you were born to rear:
Your skill with ships, your magic among men,
The playwrights laurels on your war-scarred brow
All vanished as you sank with that sharp prow
Swirling to salted rust both sword and pen.
Fame, looking for you, will mis-take your peer
Blind that he must be something so much less.
All that was budding in you withers now:
Of what rich patterns is this world bereft!

The fame your own deep music would have won,
The generative power of your own song,
The palaces of light you would have reared,

The spear you would have forged to slaughter wrong,
The crown of laurels that you must have worn,
All that you dreamed, we hoped and you desired
Goes disembodied, for it is not sired.
There is a gap in every shining morn
A sweet note missing out of every song
A leader absent who would have endeared
The very vagrants who prefer the wrong ;
Your task, truncated, never will be done.

You sailed in the high noon-day of your youth
While song was forming on your laughing lips
While life was calling to your massive strength
While gallant pennants led to active quests
With comrades gathering round to follow you
To a bright future full of happy toil,
Wrestling with Athene and the soil,
That men in future might give both their due
And horny hands receive Olympian guests.
Wisdom and labour should in peace at length
Sailing to harbour with the war stained ships
Have hailed you in this life's resplendent truth.

In a wild moment all was wrenched in twain
The *Cossack* murdered, with a broken back,
Your strength destroyed by instantaneous speed,
That severed elements, re-crashed and rolled
Like booming thunder over rearing waves.
You, our Bill Rose, sucked in this vortex down,
Wearing for ever a rosemary crown.
Are you now laughing in Nerina's caves
Herding sleek porpoises to *Neptune's* fold ?
Or did the impact make your warm heart bleed
Upon the fringes of the seaweed track
To citadels whence you'll not come again.

You in an instant, Bill, stepped out of time
Into the immortality men gain
When loyal love of friends is so enfused
That music paints your portrait in the wind
Blowing for ever through life's living harp.
I have not wept for you, I cannot weep.

You stepped through bonds to life from your deep sleep
For us the wakening is cold and sharp,
Numbing the suddenly assaulted mind.
The potent budding in your youth occlused
Drops withered from life's broken tree in pain
For you were felled before your manhood's prime.

So swiftly, swiftly, swiftly, all was shed
Disruptive water with its myriad powers
Of transformation swept you into lives
Manifold, cool, remote, concealed, and strange.
The body nurtured by ten myriad lives
Returned their gifts, speeding along their ways
Carrying the torch of life through ocean's maze,
Molecular enravishment that strives
Through all life's facets eagerly to range.
Having received, generous, your body gives
And scatters in its giving like the flowers.
Yet you, Bill Rose, Bill Rose, you are not dead.

Now you and I who never thought to kiss
Are linked more closely by your sudden flight
Than ever we had been had you lived on
Working in matter not so wide dispersed.
To-day I am your voice, you being dead
Mould many others through me. I rejoice
To be your mouth-piece that your echoing voice
May seem to distant men like light ahead,
Praying that peace may not, like war, be cursed.
Duty came first, you garland it with flowers,
No passion linked us, but the deep delight
Of comrades, we who never wished to kiss.

I must go to the garden's flower-stocked bed
Where you had planned to dig the scented earth
That muscles should be gently harnessed in
To spirits' service, and from soil to draw
Soul's nutriment with body's nourishment.
When of all outward clamour I am rid
In quiet gardens I will softly bid
The lily fill her cup with scented thought
To fling abroad your purest dreams of law

For all mankind, to close the road to sin.
Winds from the sea repeat, repeat, give birth
To echoes that your gospel may be spread.

"My life has been all preparation—toil—
To fit me for the labour coming soon.
I do not want to die, I want to live
To find my true fulfilment in the share
Of adult's work, not adolescents' war.
All's preparation for the days to come,
Till then a part of me seems always numb.
I cannot use the accumulating store.
Flashes of pleasure, shallows of despair
Have seemed but preparation I must give
For living. Then true working is the boon—
To dig foundations into England's soil."

We your true friends who loved your radiant glow
Rippling with laughter, reaching out from strength,
Who loved your hands grappling with urgent work
Your eager eyes, piercing the distant light
Your beating heart, firm in its tenderness
Your upright will to serve our country's need,
The bell of your great voice, its power to plead
With a contagious valiant happiness;
You were a magnet drawing toward the right
Those who, alone, life's harder tasks would shirk;
We had not known to what a bitter length
Our salt tears on salt waves for you would flow.

All your friends mourn you, none are comforted
By other ties, though nearer. You unique
With voice like conch to temple worship sounded
Mellow as cowslip bells with honey filled
Or booming, rock-defeated ocean roaring.
How like a lighthouse tower you stood supreme
With fellowship your penetrating beam
Refulgently to unknown distance pouring.
Mean thoughts shrank in your laughter and were killed
Your stern command on gentleness was founded.
You straightened what in others lay oblique.
All your friends loved you, none are comforted.

Ah ! Bill, you have escaped life's bitterest grief ;
You died with youth's hopes unfulfilled, but bright,
You knew powers surging forward in your veins,
You schooled a dozen qualities to train
Yourself to use yourself for valiant quests,
Your future smiled, your past was stepping stones
Of rock, not as too many feel, of bones.
You opened wide your heart to many guests,
Learned both from silence and the hurricane,
Rode life triumphantly, gripping the reins.
Then you leapt through that bleak and foggy night
Wherein youth loses its warm heart's belief.

You watched the Pole star in the cloudless sky,
You steered by heaven through the watery wastes,
In solitude you learned to know your soul,
Turning for fellowship to noble thought
You wrote in music what the stars had taught.
Your poems, that you called your children, too
Sank and were drowned in that cold sea with you.
What was the treasure lone hours dearly bought
That washing water seemed to swirl to naught ?
Of all these travels, what was your own goal
The lordly palace whence your essence hastes
Now it is freed, like light, in space to fly ?

You stepped through matter, but you have not gone
Your imprint on too many hearts was set
For you to vanish like a morning cloud ;
True love in motion cannot thus be checked.
As the Immortals fought upon the plain
With power enhanced by spirits freer guise
Unfurl new wings of love across our skies.
Like Homer's heroes, fight for us again.
What happens when a gallant ship is wrecked
And moving water is her winding shroud ?
In seeming chaos life does not forget.
You stepped through matter, sweep our spirits on !

MARIE CARMICHAEL STOPES.

See Obituary in the "Times," December 4th, 1941, p. 7. Lieut. Rose was not only a fine naval officer : he had written a number of beautiful poems which, pending publication he had with him, and which also went down on the Cossack.

MOUNTAIN AIR

AT OR NEAR DELPHI.

SOCRATES: Behold, our second bout of talk has likewise lasted four hours! Selene filled this eastward-facing porch with light when we began, which has now glid completely outside. Thine argument and mine lie before my memory even as those trees and buildings lie fused in serenity, though the first grew by divine impulse while the stone walls were built by such coarse hands as mine.

DIOTIMA: Thou flatterest, though thou hast no need to.

SOCRATES: I am in my prime and the companion of my bed is far away at Athens; O Mantinean, thou art as far from thy home; and though thou mayest be half a dozen years my senior, I now feel that having enjoyed each other's minds, the time for silence has come, when my humble hands might ask thy body for an intimacy which the discretion of the retiring moon renders opportune.

DIOTIMA: I intend to climb the mountain. Thou mayest sleep within there or, if thou verily hast need of a companion, this town is not poor in those who welcome strangers to their beds.

SOCRATES: Pardon my blunder, Priestess, but thou hast spoken of love as the relation between those who abound in and those who lack beauty, and meseems we are even such a pair.

DIOTIMA: I am not offended, Socrates, nay, I feel honoured by thy desire: but thou hast stricken me with another kind of passion, which the bodily tenderness thou invitest me to share will never allay, but rather fever and exasperate, as I by much experience have learned. I unhook this sheepskin cloak, for I shall sleep on a bluff top, and when I wake the grass and thyme may be stiff and hoar.

. . . . . .

DIOTIMA: So the sun's warmth, which has turned the crumbly frost into dew, has woken thee.

SOCRATES: May I sit beside thee?

DIOTIMA: Of course, thou art most welcome.

SOCRATES: So soon as I was alone last night, my doubts were whether I had been meant to follow thee? or was a mere fool that had let thee escape? or were all such thoughts not rather fit to shame a lover of wisdom who had been entertained by so rare a prophetess? Indeed my mind was like an agora in which drovers bid furiously one against another, even shaking their fists in the faces of those who offer more than they can afford—till my poor hesitancy to whom the purchase had been adjudged felt almost like a detected criminal. So I bowed my head to the worst, and gradually the market-place emptied, and I perceived that my body like a sold ass quietly waited my good pleasure, for I was evidently its owner. Then I remembered having noted the direction taken by thy

distancing steps, and set out at a good pace and, when I came upon the mountain, in the gorge my ear detected the tinkling of stones thy feet displaced on the higher zig-zags, and, as I mounted, at length I saw thee arrive in the moonlight and disappear on to the brow; whence, when I too came there, I could see thee laid along in sleep. Again I stood in doubt. Should I approach and roll myself close to thy side, or should I sleep where I was in the blanket I had snatched up from thine alcove? Two or three steps had been taken towards thee, when a voice said "No" so that I turned me about; but discovering solitude only, fell to tremble. Gradually the stars and the stillness reassured me. Then I offered thanks to whatever daimon or god might have warned me, and lay down and slept.

DIOTIMA: This makes thee yet more precious!... No, no, dear Socrates, I am not asking to be embraced!... on the contrary I hope never to find myself in thine arms—for such things may well happen even when we are resolved to avoid them. But we are both hungry, and shepherds have hovels over yonder, whence we hear the bells tinkling—Come and buy pulse baked hard and cheese and a draught of freshly-drawn ewe's milk, and then return to this shoulder, where, if thou hast leisure, I could tell thee my life.

. . . . . .

DIOTIMA: So the world is once more beneath our feet and no one within earshot. Whenever I see so vast a prospect, the beauty renews my childhood. We forget—O, even I, who struggle always not to, forget the preciousness which hundreds of things then had. Merely to see or to hear was holy. The oleanders by our stream, the great hawk-moth my brother found, awed me more than the shrine at Delphi can now. To hear water or wind was a rapture like the unexpected voice of a first-beloved. These memories are too exquisite for words, but I see they still quicken in thee.

My father's favourite, I employed every artifice my ignorance could devise to have him to myself. He entered the house instantly retrieving the dusty room from staleness, and enduing the crust with relish. When we were alone my questions could lead him on to talk of his vines, of the price of corn, of the Persian invasion, until, like one waking from sleep he would say, "This business is not for a child, go dandle thy dolls!" Then would I kiss him and fondle and presently whisper some words he had dropped on a matter of poise, till I was again forgotten in his own concerns, or those of the town, or of Hellas. Thus, before ten years were mine, would I slake my thirst for understanding at the deepest well within reach. Nor was I a whit less avid for merry-makings and festivals; for, not content with public ones or those of our relatives, I

often begged a welcome at those of more distant acquaintance, and have even left my bed to creep under tables in the colonades where the men foregathered to drink after nightfall. There the contagion of their laughter would shake me, and thence my notes could safely plunge through the billows of their choruses, as undetected as fish in a storm: till one day my father was surprised by my mimicking the behaviour of a neighbour in his cups, who had never been seen thus save in the small hours. Grown up junketings had as irresistible attraction for me as had romps with other children. There was ever too little dancing for my feet. How I enjoyed waking when the birds were singing at dawn! Glee thrilled me like a creature in a net that would rush to enter their bodies and share their wings. I leaped naked from bed and hugged myself at the door as though my prisoner were escaping, whom I feared yet half-longed to let go.

The griefs of those days, when my brother broke his ankle, when my sister died, were agonies. Before the bone was set, the pain seemed mine own, and I could hardly soothe him for longing to add shriek or moan to his. I would have risen out of my sister's body into our mother's arms, and, when she put me aside in her hopeless woe, floods of compassion dissolved my frustration in her mood. My father fell at Ithome. With twelve years of never-to-be-renewed experience, a widowed mother and two younger brothers, my heart was too sick to speak. Poverty came as a friend, and set me relentless tasks which could rarely be left for play or feast. Three summers later I was demanded by a rich man more than ten years my senior, and my mother gave me in return for help which he extended to my brothers. He was good: I often won him to talk as my father used, but, when I was most interested, he would push converse aside and require the service of my body, and the period before this cross-purposed climax was reached seemed to grow ever briefer. Then three children were born; each coming like an agonized end of one life and the beginning of a fuller contentment within narrower limits, as though wine had been decanted into a slimmer flask, and therefore though less in quantity stood higher in the neck. Bemused by warm maternity was I, when in one breathless summer a plague killed all three. Their poor inconsolable father was persuaded along with some who were setting out for Delphi. He never returned, having been stabbed in a seaport when interposing between half-fuddled companions who had drawn their irons after drinking wine more heady than ours. My despair became so listless that I failed to respond to an advantageous proffer of marriage, therefore some neighbours devised a visit to Corinth in order to beseech the goddess to heal my riven heart. And the new scene, the great temple, and those crowds of courtesans won from me

reviving interest. I made friends with some hetairai from across the sea and envied them their opportunities of converse with men from distant cities. At length I decided to dedicate myself. Four others on whom Aphrodite had bestowed unusual charm agreed with me to exact an oath from those who besought us, that they would in nothing constrain us against our inclination. On these terms alone would we confer our company : so from us everything was won by persuasion, nothing granted to custom or to force. The coins given merely bought opportunities of pleasing us. I had learned this wisdom from observing how my husband had always wanted the more indulgence the less fellowship he gave, and yet had prized my embraces higher the longer he had wooed for them. And from those who accepted our terms I enormously profited ; they opened diverse modes of life before my eyes ; from musicians and sophists I was particularly eager to learn, and thou mayest judge whether I was able to conquer the lyre and to lead on enthralling discourse, since having interpreted several oracles into appropriate counsels, among others that concerning the best means of warding Athens from the threat of plague, men began to pay merely to have speech with me, or to hear me strike the strings in that Dorian mood which I preferred. Thus I could withhold my body, for my heart went out to few. When my fame had called forth the invitation, I quit the temple of Aphrodite and was welcomed to that of Zeus at my native Mantinea, from whence I have more recently gone on pilgrimages to many famous shrines that I might learn the full mind of their priests. And thus it happened that thou didst find me here.

Socrates : Wouldst thou, Diotima, advise us men to teach our daughters never to yield the body until a man has opened to them the treasure of a well-stored mind ?

Diotima : Many men have little thought to give.

Socrates : Might women do better never to breed save by philosophers ?

Diotima : Was thy father a sage ? Mine was none.

. . . . . .

Socrates : Since silence fell on thee, Diotima, the eagle that hung away there to the left, has twice, after remaining poised for a prolonged period, sailed towards the right.

Diotima : When I return to Mantinea, I shall seek contributions towards building a small temple to another divinity whom I would now serve rather even than Zeus.

Socrates : Which of the gods attracts thy worship ?

Diotima : One who is more and more neglected.

Socrates : Dost thou mean Chronos or Ouranos ? . . . That head-shake and this renewed muteness perplex me. Ought I to have guessed ?

Diotima : Dear Socrates, how shouldst thou, since I have not told

thee? O man, lover of my soul! what god was it that slew my three children and their father, when I had become content, on their account, to live less? . . . Thy wit is benumbed; let us race one another to yonder lawn on the next shoulder . . . The way is strewn with stones and will exact our featest footing.

. . . . . .

DIOTIMA: Thou hast outstripped me, but thou dost run less gainly. Had any been watching they would have been disappointed to see thee win.

SOCRATES: Gracefulness captures both eye and heart, mere well-doing appeals to the latter alone.

DIOTIMA: Let us sit down, perhaps I may *here* be able to say what I could not *there* . . . Almost was I my body when its whole harvest went into Death's basket . . . I was stunned till in Aphrodite's temple my spirit re-awakened and was soon wrestling with that august patron of the fruitful womb, charm against charm . . . Her worshippers became fellow suppliants with me at other shrines, her priestesses agreed to prize mind and soul above the body,—to esteem thought and character above generation,—adventure beyond satisfaction . . . Art thou groping for a flea? . . . Oho! Did thy wife hang this little image round thy neck?

SOCRATES: She trusts it to prevent the attraction of strange beds. The work poorly represents the goddess, with a naïve insistence on function rather than on grace and proportion.

DIOTIMA: On Aphrodite men must gaze while they pray: but those who beseech her twin sister, close their eyes. Nemesis blinds those that dare confront her.

SOCRATES: Nemesis?

DIOTIMA: Yes, She who slew them . . . all who were mine! . . . The fire-white Aphrodite, invisible, intangible, inexorable! Her worshippers are scholars and comrades, not ravishers and spouses. She has no patience with any spirit that can be satisfied. Therefore her fane shall be void and all dark within, and without unburdened with statuary, but clustered round with slim columns that seem to ask for—and to consent in—silence, as awaiting a music faint and difficult of interpretation which would enthral the heart rather than the ear . . . Is not the soul embalmed in darkness, and fenced by an immaculate severity . . . which radiates not light like the sun, or thought like an oracle, but pure intent? . . .—O hard to adore! difficult to obey! Thou who demandest ever that we leave our treasures for that which is more valuable. Divinest cruelty! . . .—Heed not these tears! Look! the thick roots of this short grass have pushed into the earth and found a way round stones, millions of them. Theirs is like thought's persistency; the mountain is ignorance but these fibres, so frail that we hear hundreds of them

sever as I lift the turf, have, as far as they can burrow, filled it with themselves, leavened it, made it live. I love this mountain soil, so clean and easy to powder, see! it is as full of stars as the night sky, little patines; those are the philosopher's brilliant difficulties in discovery of which thou art so cunning. O be my brother, Socrates, and I will be thy sister . . So we can kiss, prelude to no limited satisfaction, but to an immense mutual encouragement, which shall flood and re-flood the cisterns of memory . . . And now let us measure the vigour of our limbs against the vastness of these old mountains; for my mind and heart are wearied.

. . . . . .

Socrates: All yesterday we walked and climbed like mad, mostly on rugged shoulders, rarely descending to cross a gorge, and we have passed our second night lying as far apart as on our first. Yet no thoughts and but few and simple words have we, lovers of wisdom, exchanged. True, when we sang the old hymn in the twilight, I felt as though, having known thee all my life, nothing could be said by either but what must be already familiar to the other! And now when my tongue feels awkward for lack of use, and my mind is as vacant as a cave, thou askest me for the story of my life. O Diotima, were the fountain of thine eloquence within me, the narrative would sound as much less enthralling than thy history as my features are more homely and my soul less enterprising.

Yesterday, I often wondered why thou wouldst build a temple to Nemesis. Is not Pallas Athena as severe, as beautiful, and far less cruel? . . .

Ah, I see, I shall not succeed in distracting thee from thy demand, by asking questions! Those lips firmly refuse to part and thy gaze is terribly expectant, and the laughter in thy heart wins no weakness from its gaoler. Well, my father was an indifferent stone-carver, but my mother was an excellent midwife. She always accounted for the misfortune of my nose, by the fact that she had not been able to secure her own services at my birth. I must have been left, she held, face downward on some hard surface for an unconscionable time. My eyes were thus pushed yet farther apart, their brows lost salience and my forehead became an yet blanker wall.

The consequence has been, that seeing other's eyes either averted from me or twinkling with ridicule, I, being undistracted by hopes of rivalling even the plainest, have been free to lose myself in admiration, as I have these two days past in worship of thy beauty which is so frank, so full of fire, and yet able, like a bird, to become in brief space remote as a distant peak. Well, I recall childhood's surprise at and infatuation before the bodies of more comely playmates. Alas! my soft infant frame had fared as unhappily on that slab as my too malleable features.

The shoulders had fallen forward and apart, the toes been bent up and the feet pressed sideways till their heels touched. Then, daunted by these handicaps, the whole structure lost up-springing elation and became disposed to broaden and harden as under a dumb foreboding of the many knotty perplexities with which I was destined to wrestle. Thus it became easier for me to forget myself in study and contemplation, than for those whose attractiveness was reflected from envious or adoring eyes; while they were at the same time inclined to affect my company as by contrast setting off their advantages. Besides, how could I ever compete for that sweet drug admiration, for which a thirst is so easily acquired?—though I administered it to them in unstinted draughts. Hadst thou not told me of thy early worship for even a moth, I should have claimed to have been peculiarly aware of the perfection of leaves and fronds, birds and animals, taught by my own lack of shapeliness. For whatever reason the preciousness of this world was evident to me as to thee; so that I was adverse to that mischievousness which leads boys to enjoy breaking boughs from trees, or trampling down rushes or flowering herbs, and would often induce them to skirt round luxuriant nooks, which but for my foresight they would have devastated. I was eager to forestall the persecution of the frog and salamander, locust or cicala, or, if it were on foot, to distract my comrades from their victim. There had been days when I believed all I was told, but gradually I began to suspect on what trifling grounds the most positive assertions were made. Thus I commenced sifting knowledge from assurance by persistency in question, and acquired the art of whetting curiosity, while I baffled pursuit, till such ardour was aroused as would scorn to desist until the ever virgin truth escaping, left homely ignorance in our arms. But long before this skill was acquired the propensity had brought me into conflict with my father, who was teaching me his craft. He would say the width of Apollo's shoulders goes four times into his height. I asked "Hast thou seen the god?" and his "Of course not" would provoke "How canst thou then know the proportion between his breadth and his stature?" If he retorted that Myron or Kresilas had so represented him, I queried "Had they seen him?"—"Not that I know."—"Has anybody seen him?"—"Homer or Adrastus or some priest at Delos may have seen him."—"May?"—"How can I say?"—"And yet thou knowest the length of his thigh?" All this came back to me yesterday when thou saidst that Nemesis was "fire-white." My poor father could only scratch his head; what canst thou say?

DIOTIMA: Nay, Socrates, I will explain my thought when thou hast told me how thou foundest thee friends and a wife, and such other things as thou hast done which are noteworthy.

SOCRATES: When in camp I chose always that comrade whose body was most perfect, and tried to arouse in his mind an answering perfection. And as I was much commended both for courage and endurance, I had little difficulty in sharing my tent with my chosen, even though several rivals had first to be ousted; for I was careful to feed his worthiest hopes, while others would have him dependent. I encouraged him to be the hard master of his body, that in all straits we might rely each on the other's utmost efficiency, making enemies afraid and comrades eager to follow our lead. Had I the gift I would touch thee to tears over the death of more than one splendid fellow who had been son, brother, and lover to me, since my mind had begotten his.

When from campaign after campaign I returned with the good words of my commanders, my father at last sought a wife for me, but found that the sires of comely daughters, though they commended me, were all bent on having beautiful grandchildren, and would not hear of an ugly sculptor, however brave and industrious. Now there was a girl, Xantippe, with a head of hair like a thundercloud, whom I had noted in her childhood; for twice had her father turned her into the street, where she perforce stood at his door for hours, because her indignation knew no bounds. I had, when she ceased to be shaken by sobs, questioned her about the cause of her misfortune. She had been bidden to wash her brother's blanket, though he never washed hers, yet hers was never so dirty. Till they were seven, they had been companions, but now he was encouraged to despise one whom a year or so back he had followed like a tail. Her father had repeatedly thrashed her for resenting contumely from this puppy. He was now one of an herd of boys and only came home when he wanted fresh shirt or blanket, and then swaggered as though the mettle of the whole troup of his companions were lodged in his breast. To distract her I told her of many absurdities that I, when a child, had noted in the behaviour of my own parents, till she joined me in laughter and forgot both tears and indignation, to drink in my advice,—which was to ask forgiveness of her father and enact humility, even as, were he an ox who persisted in occupying the whole path, she would go round, knowing that it was useless to argue with him.

The second time, her sister was about to be married and she had had to work all the previous night to complete sprinkling the bridal chlamys with needle-wrought flowers. That morning the bride in impatience had torn the overfold badly with the pin. Xantippe had been bidden finish her own chlamys, already further advanced than her sister's had been. Not only was it unjust that so much of the work should fall on her, but no more skeins of the silk she had used were to be had in Athens so that she could never again match the work on her snood, for she must

use what remained in finishing her sister's. This time I explained how, in a battle, those who can, must do far more than those deficient in temper or training or endowment, and she had gone in to help finish her own dress for her sister to wear. Repulsed in several directions, I bethought me how this little Xantippe was now of marriageable years, and that a reputed fury might not be much besought; whereas no little understanding and goodwill already existed between us. So I persuaded my father to bespeak her by saying that I looked forward to an excellent discipline in living at peace with a storm.

DIOTIMA: And hast thou profited?—and has peace?

SOCRATES: There have been squalls, but the weather always became more delightful after than before. She has many virtues and not a few charms. Were it not for our neighbours' wives, I had been less ready to seize the occasion of this pilgrimage, as promising a rest to my talents as peacemaker which are always in request so soon as I return from military service. And now, most wise and handsome sister, it is only fair that thou tell me how thou knowest Nemesis to be fire-white.

DIOTIMA: I remember too well the course thy cunning questions ran the day before yesterday, and that boast of how thy poor father was distracted, not to foresee the question "Have I seen her," or "met any who have?" So I will give thee all such 'noes' in an handful. No, my beloved brother, no, no, no, no. My ignorance is at least as great as thine own. Yet, how can I release that which so fills my heart? Not by questioning thee; I have no such skill. Nay, I would rather let thee overhear a debate in my own mind. "What does this word 'world' name?" "Everything that I see, and all I should see into however many lands travel might carry me." "Do I know the world?" "Certainly not, I hardly know the half of Hellas. Persia and Egypt, I have met men who have seen. Of India and Tartessus I have only heard reports of reports; and there are yet great countries no rumour from which has reached my ear. This word 'world' then names more of my ignorance than of my knowledge, and yet I conceive of the world as of one thing".... "I speak of good, what do I name with that word?" "Many men and women I have proved to be good, but still more might have been so proved had I but met them." Last week I had no dream that there was man alive so good as I find thee. The world is made up of lands and seas, but the whole of good should I think consist of persons. Things are also good, but they are only truly so, to the good. Most men, like thy defeated Athenians, think things seized by force are still good: but thou and I, Socrates, have agreed that such things are full of harm and breed hatred, sudden revenges and bitter broodings. Many also count pleasures good, but thou and I have learned that only timely pleasures

are good, those for which we need not quit our place in the disciplined files of life's advance. Now many of the best men, as Homer, Solon, Lycurgus and Aristides are dead. And the whole of good must embrace them and all other poets and creators of peace and prosperity, and those who successfully withstood and defeated aggression. So I, like most men, call the divine virtue Zeus, as we speak of towns as goddesses having characters, though more sublime, like those which distinguish their worshippers. So Athens, besides being beautiful as a goddess and strong as a warrior has an owl-eyed wisdom such as thine, and probes darkness which baffles other eyes. So Mantinea has been the haunt of mantic voices, such as men recognise in me. This good Zeus, these civil goddesses are of the following nature. When I say "triangle," I do not name any particular triangular place, like the corn-market at Mantinea. I name something not on this earth; for if with my finger I draw a triangle in the dust and thou dost the same, each is a particular triangular mark not 'triangle.' So when I think of what characterizes good men, I must figure Zeus. If I, next, ask what trait must most dominate his character, I find it that which will not forgive him should he choose evil rather than good, even as thou and the best of thy fellow townsfolk cannot forgive Athens for deserting the magnanimity of Pericles. So a good man is one who will not easily forgive himself for choosing ill, and is inclined therefore to find more fault in himself than his neighbours find. When therefore I ask what is most essential to the divine? What is it that rules the mind of Zeus? I find it is that which never condones a fault but expects, exacts, and drives towards perfection, and this we Greeks call, Nemesis; and hers is surely a characteristic that no thing can possess but only a person. Now thou wilt ask "Hast thou ever met such a person?" and I reply "I have just told thee how my thought encountered her, and how I perceived that most other Greeks had done the same, since they had agreed as to what character that name designated. Yet, even as we never completely know our best-beloved's character or even our own, so, only still more so, we never definitely grasp that of any divinity." Such thoughts as are completely understood become like pebbles, much mortar is needed before they can be used even in a poor kind of wall; but in hymns or drama, oration or discourse, thoughts fit like nicely dressed stones prepared to hold together by receiving shapes never completely proper to them; indeed, in prophetic eloquence, they become like the digits and other bones of the hand, able to seize and shake the soul in their grasp: yet, when they are separated, resemble plum and cherry stones. O my brother, who would substitute for the gods every dead notion incorporate with their animation, but from which a greedy logic has sucked the pulp and spat them forth like dry bones to

form part of a helpless heap of husks and litter ? I prefer the vocabulary of common folk and poets about divine apprehensions, rather than like a sophist to pretend that the unknown is merely the known over again but without the charm and power of life.

SOCRATES : Though I have given most painful heed to thy discourse and have been ravished by thine eloquence, most dear sister, be not wroth if I confess that I have not learned how thou camest to know that Nemesis was fire-white.

DIOTIMA : Dear my love, I mean, dear brother, we had better, if thou wilt be so good, begin to walk ; I will answer thee as we go. Hast thou ever peeped repeatedly into a furnace and so seen the scorching red metal become at one point white, until its shape was lost in light. So when I think of Nemesis I feel a blinding attraction to which I can only fitfully and amazedly respond, but which thrills me, though my weak eyes and thought flinch and must be guarded from its searing glare. Even in thee I am conscious of a persistence of enquiry so intense that my being would be withered by it, wert thou not at the same time as responsive as laughing affection and radiant with a most gentle reverence for that in myself and in my thought which is undiscovered. Please remove thy gaze from my face, or from burning red it may become incandescent, or at least . . .

SOCRATES : I will walk behind thee.

DIOTIMA : Nay, I would rather thou shouldst lead . . . Let me return to Nemesis. I found her described as the fire-white, twin sister of Aphrodite in an old hymn, and the words immediately wedded those experiences of which I speak. In Aphrodite, they carve the greatest beauty that the eyes and touch can compass, far too much for the intellect to analyse or comprehend : so the invisible, intangible Nemesis is too brilliant for our senses, too living to be unravelled by reason.

SOCRATES : The day before yesterday, thou shewedst me that Love could not be a god, but at most only a daimon, since his mother was mortal namely, Need, and but half divine since his father was Superfluity. Now thou givest me pause as to whether Nemesis may not be the most essentially divine of all the gods. This requires repeated pondering and I will not question thee further, until I have inwardly traced some possible issue. Both priestess and prophetess art thou to me, dear sister, and even should I discover thee in error about Nemesis, thy thought has filled my mind with joyous excitement and with hopes to win from thee yet more enlightenment.

DIOTIMA : See, beneath these crags there is a spring. Couldst thou clamber down thither. I challenge thee to it.

SOCRATES : Follow me, an thou dare.

DIOTIMA: To bathe the face in this clear cold wonder of water is divine refreshment . . . Look, there is a cavern above us . . . I will climb in at that dark doorway. Do thou wait for me here.

. . . . . .

SOCRATES: Ho, shepherd! hast thou seen a tall woman carrying a sheepskin cloak folded on her shoulder, or else like a bale balanced on her head?

SHEPHERD: Nay, Stranger, no creature wiser than a sheep have mine eyes lit on since the dawn, till I saw thee.

SOCRATES: She left me a while since, as I supposed to ease nature, entering this cave; but now I have been inside and she is not there, nor has it any other aperture. Yet here I stood waiting for her the whole time.

SHEPHERD: See, on this mud a woman's sandal-prints pointing to the cave, and others see point away from it! My lusty cummer, hast thou snored standing while thy mate slipped past thee? A dancing jest, by Pan's hooves! Thou wilt find her at thy crib unless, full-wearied of thee, she now lead some sprightlier wether.

. . . . . .

SOCRATES: I am come, Diotima, but Althea tells me a cough has of late often prevented thy desire to speak. Our bodies are never perfect servants, but are ever ready to become uncontrollable.

DIOTIMA: The body is innocent, Socrates, completely innocent. We Greeks have understood this far better than the barbarians, who feel shame for it and think some of its functions unspeakable. But we are sane enough to talk about all that we feel and do without clandestine jests such as they affect, but simply as the occasion demand. And, if we laugh, we laugh freely without detrimental innuendo, as though we were betraying our thoughts into some debasing ambush. My body was devoured with desire for thine, when I left thee.

SOCRATES: I also was wont for long to regret those un-seized opportunities.

DIOTIMA: I refused to regret them, for, because my body so yearned for thine, thy mind became my constant companion. Thought the most difficult and arduous was fostered by desires the most alluring and enveloping. The masterful tide of the blood's richest proclivity was poured like an army in the wake of captain enquiries to conquer perplexity after perplexity. Our separation proved more splendidly fecund than our coupling could have done. At length, I perceived that the divine Nemesis had taught me this discipline. Every time I would have set out for Athens hoping to rejoin thee, the siege made it impossible, or else some trifling accident would turn my steps in some

other direction, till I foresaw that this source of energy and absorption might well last my life long. To embrace thy body, nay, even to hear thy voice would have endangered all I had won and was to win.

SOCRATES: I, too, made a similar discovery and have harnessed unsatisfied desire to mental endeavour. Alcibiades had a most worshipful figure, and owned a daring and independence of mind that only failed because he obeyed the promptings of instinct instead of ruling them. He once tried to enveigle me into wanton indulgence, so that he might become my superior in every respect; but admiration for thy continence held so close to me that he could not slip between us.

ALTHEA: Let her cough, she can no longer even hear, much less speak.

SOCRATES: Hast thou been her scholar?

ALTHEA: This twenty odd years since, we were seven or eight whom she called daughters, and trained as men are trained; she would have us wrestle and race in the field no more ashamed to be seen naked than boys are: and led our minds in discussions through all the knowledge and resource of male minds. But marriage began to thin our numbers, and one husband after another grew loud in objection at such equality in freedom and power. Then the parents of those who were younger withdrew us, lest she should spoil our chance of a fortunate match. When my father died, I whom no man asked for, alone returned to my trainer. She had accepted the decision of the event, saying that Mantinea was not yet a fit nursery for women like Aspasia. "Struggle not against the stream of occurrence," she would smile, "the stream still supports thee, rest upon it, and in time thou shalt descry some other good the achievement of which its current favours. Do not persist in following the first end thy heart desired. Every good is worthy of effort, but we are weak without the favour of the stream, with its help thou wilt labour for what can as well as what ought to be done." So she set herself to second her neighbours in efforts that only needed a little aid to become successful, and won back the regard of the whole town, especially during the war between Sparta and Argos. Thou wilt see many arrive this evening with gifts and grateful hearts. She has often spoken of thy wisdom, O Athenian.

SOCRATES: Not only has her cough been silent for some time but her eyes are watching us.

DIOTIMA: Yes, yes, dear Socrates forgive me this interruption; but I see thou art the very person of patience. Stoop thine ear nearer, that I may save my voice. Yes, authority dwells in perfection, and we may see in another, precisely what lacks in ourselves, once our eyes are hungry with love.

SOCRATES: We should be mad indeed to exchange that appetite for repletion.

DIOTIMA: Nemesis has loved us both. She stands always beyond those whom we most adore, as though behind a cutain; if they draw aside, there stands someone else beyond whom she is yet hidden; for every curtain is a person and every person a veil. We never learn what she is like . . . Beautiful as Aphrodite yes, yes, far more so, too bright for our eyes! Yet if we die before we learn, as I am dying, at least we know that we do not know the perfect yet, though we may have drawn nearer to it, by great efforts of mind and anxiety to be beneficent. I had never before so grasped this, as when parting from thee thirty years ago, I so longed to clasp thee in my arms, yet saw that thou wast completely self-forsaken, so far away with thy thoughts, that thou couldst neither see nor hear me. Nor was thy blood disturbed by the tumult of mind which yet was within reach of thy hand. Thou wast with Nemesis within the light. She has favoured thee by giving thee so strong a mind, and even, as thou didst tell me, by warning thee with an audible "No."

SOCRATES: My body had longed for thine many times during those three days. Not my strength but thine withstood it.

DIOTIMA: Not mine, but hers.

SOCRATES: Thy hair is white and mine is greying. I had ceased to regret not finding thee. Unfound I have never finished asking thee questions, and listening for thy reply, when no other could answer. And though I have now heard thy voice again, and tasted thy wisdom once more, I shall leave thee far from satisfied.

DIOTIMA: Nemesis hates all who can be satisfied. For life is only a mixture of light and darkness, knowledge and ignorance, thought and flesh, always half truth and half deception. Even the loveliest body like a temple demands an yet lovelier statue, but thou wast rugged as that cave; yet in thee I found no ordinary acquaintance that could grow stale, but better than friend, lover or husband, one who whispered from farther than the wind, and as a star sparkles in a puddle . . . Give me thine hand to hold.

. . . . . .

SOCRATES: Since thy last coughing, thou hast been silent a long time, Diotima; hast thou anything more to say?

ALTHEA: She does not hear? . . . is not asleep? . . . This heart no longer beats! . . . Wait! . . . Now, observe! . . . The down on this feather trembles no whit!

SOCRATES: Yet she looks unchanged.

ALTHEA: To be unchanged is not to be.

T. STURGE MOORE.

THE ASIATIC ELEMENT IN SWINBURNE

IN 1936, speaking at the World Congress of Faiths, I remarked: "The spirit of man is a sort of Congo forest, of which we know little except the intricacies of its tortuous mazes." And now, six years later, though I have gathered more experience (at least I hope so), I am inclined to say the same thing. Man remains a mystery. His inwardness escapes us. What he reveals—and he reveals something in moments of glee or gloom—is only a part of what he is. *Is.* It is this isness that eludes us. Even Shakespeare and Balzac and Dostoievsky do not take us into the penetralia of the human spirit. A few hints and surmises are all that they give us. No one, in East or West, has understood man in all his multiplicity of *esse.* Indeed, if I may say exactly what I feel, our so-called thinkers have offered us merely a quantity of useful darkness. We have to go to the Bibles of the various nations for a few jets of light. The rest is not silence, but simple echolalia.

Did biographers realise all this, they would be dumb. But, happily or unhappily, they are, in the main, unthinking animals. Light-heartedly, they bury this or that great man under a couple of heavy tomes. "God save me from the attentions of the literary grave-digger," A.E. once told me. "A certain gentleman has already written about me, and, believe me, I feel as though I can hear the rustle of the wings of the Angel of Death pass over me. He may perpetrate a biography when I am gone. Oh dear! Oh dear!" The worst happened. Poor A.E.!

All this is to say that we should never be in a hurry—especially we smaller men—to decide points which remain open and cannot be decided. The situation of man's mind imposes, in my view, a less distinct horizon. After the "things are not what they seem" should come "I too but seem." Appearances are essentially variable and untrustworthy. Faith in value, which is inherently necessary, cannot be expressed since all phenomena are apt to deceive. The moment's content of consciousness is all that is in a reliable focus, and in a minute it becomes a memory, liable to misinterpretation, inviting self-deception! Our instinctive meaning is perhaps more important than our reasoned meaning:

> Alas, too soon, all man's grave reasons disappear
> Yet I think at God's tribunal some large answer you shall hear.

The argument from authority is ineffective because we are the final authority, known to ourselves. That this position is more suitably expressed in poetry, parable and paradox than in *Thun und Trieben* (doing and driving) hardly needs pointing out. (Think of Jesus!). However inadequate what a man knows and means may be, what we believe he would have been right to mean approaches explicitness.

Envisaged in this spirit—I have merely thrown out an idea or two about my attitude to criticism—Swinburne appears far removed from the

trouvère of an idle lay. Is it not incumbent on us to regard him as an intellectual force, perhaps one of the few English poets to whom the title metaphysical can properly be applied ?

Coleridge undoubtedly was both scholar and thinker ; but, unlike Swinburne, he was unable to infuse his poetry with thought. Wordsworth can scarcely be charged with speculative originality. Shelley is steeped in Platonism, but leads us nowhere, and merely cries and flies round us like a storm-tossed sea-bird. Keats shows a happy indifference to, almost a placid unconsciousness of, problems of deeper import. Did he not say ?

> All charms fly
> At the touch of cold philosophy.

But had the youthful poet been spared a little longer by the gods, not crabbed would have seemed to him divine philosophy, but musical as is Apollo's lute. Browning is credited with almost a plethora of intellectual penetration, but is his poetry really more than a palestra of academic gymnastics ? Tennyson was a timid soul who never understood that bigness was the smallest part of greatness. He was a snapper-up of unconsidered scientific and philosophic trifles. He never realised that value appealed to affinity, not to knowledge. Matthew Arnold was the prophet of the British middle-classes : he decked out the obvious with many a pretty frill and conceit. He said : "Conduct is three-fourths of life." It looks as though he thought that a gentleman was the crown and glory of the human adventure upon this planet of ours. O shade of Ramakrishna !

In brief, as we look back, Swinburne stands out, from the philosophic point of view, as the only unchallenged English poet of the nineteenth century. Three or four of his pieces are amply sufficient to establish this. It is just these poems to which I would appeal, because they possess the ethos and aroma of Eastern thought.

The prevailing sentiment in the early work of Swinburne is Oriental rather than Greek. This appears in the domination of life by fate. The first *Poems and Ballads* are coloured by this thought ; but the resultant pessimism, natural in the circumstances, is more a form of rebellion than genuine despair. It is quite unlike Byron's :

> Count o'er the joys thine hours have seen,
> Count o'er the days from anguish free ;
> And know, whatever thou hast been,
> 'Tis something better—not to be.

It is, as we see in *Atalanta in Calydon,* an arrangement of the gods, much in the spirit of Fitzgerald's *Omar.*

As the years pass, this attitude of revolt gives place to one of submissive

acceptance. The conception of a malignant fate is transformed—by a sort of spiritual *tour de force*—into the callous indifference of Nature, of which man himself is part. This new credo finds utterance in *Tristram of Lyonesse :*

> How should the storms of heaven and kindled lights
> And all the depths of things and topless heights
> And air and earth and fire and water change
> Their likeness, and the natural world grow strange,
> And all the limits of their life undone
> Lose count of time and conscience of the sun,
> And that fall under which was fixed above
> That man might have a larger hour for love ?

But even here we are far removed from the kismet-theory of the East. So far, we have found only a distant kinship between Swinburne and Asia. A closer affiliation—almost an interpenetration of thought—is discovered in three remarkable poems : two possibly showing the influence of Hinduism and one that of Persia.

With the "Hymn of Man," Swinburne passed from temperamental disquietude to metaphysical speculation. Superb as is this poem, it is, as he himself asserted, but a pendant to the "Hymn to Proserpine," a poem which, for our present purpose, is much more important.

This poem may be called the *threnos* of a departed faith. In its attitude towards the gods it is at one with Hinduism. In India, be it remembered, the incessant flux and change of religious ideas inevitably suggests a similarity between things human and things divine. The gods appear as ephemeral as mortals, though a Supreme Being is postulated throughout. The "Hymn to Proserpine" embodies in music the attitude of the Asiatic votary who declines to abandon the old gods despite their overthrow ; feels assured that the reign of the new creed will be as transitory as that of its predecessors ; rejects the new divinity, and regards all appearance of truth as a shadow on the surface of *Samsara* (the visible scheme). Such is the inmost spirit of philosophic Hinduism. And it is this attitude that we find in Swinburne. Thus he sings in the "Hymn to Proserpine" :

> O lips that live blood faints in, the leavings of racks and rods
> O ghastly glories of saints, dead limbs of gibbeted Gods !
> Though all men abase themselves before you in spirit, and all knees bend,
> I kneel not neither adore you, but standing, look to the end.

But Swinburne's central ideas are all crystallised in "Hertha"—a truly philosophic poem—a poem that might well have come from a brooding Hindu bard. Swinburne himself set great store by this effort and even went so far as to claim for it "a great deal of clarified thought." It is, however, seldom recognised that the English poet—here at least—was

drawing directly from Hindu sources. He has confessed it himself in his essay on Blake. And we have further evidence of his debt to Hinduism in the Rossetti Papers. "Swinburne," we are told, "is excessively enthusiastic about the *Mahabharata* which he has been looking at in a French translation under the auspices of Bendyshe."

Now, what is the subject-matter of "Hertha"? Nothing less than the relation of man to the universe. This is a topic that, in its metaphysical aspect, is too seldom handled by Western poets, but in Eastern poetry is omnipresent, and nowhere more pervasive than in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. It was from this spring that Swinburne drank, not, be it noted, from the pools of Schopenhauer and Emerson. The following verses invite comparison with innumerable parallels in the Hindu masterpiece :

> Though sore be my burden
> And more than ye know,
> And my growth have no guerdon
> But only to grow,
> Yet fail not I of growing for lightnings above me or death-worms below.
> These too have their part in me,
> As I too in these ;
> Such fire is at heart in me,
> Such sap is this tree's
> Which hath in it all sounds and all secrets of infinite lands and seas . . .

The pantheism of our poet is nearer to the spirit of the *Bhagavad-Gita* than is that of either Schopenhauer or Emerson. Can anyone doubt the source of Swinburne's inspiration?

The central thought of the poem is entirely Hindu : surely nothing less than Vedantic. It consists in the belief, expressed in a hundred places in the literature of India, that the inward principle of creation resolves ultimately into man. In the words of Swinburne himself :

> Man, pulse of my centre, and fruit of my body, and seed of my soul.
> One birth of my bosom ;
> One beam of mine eye ;
> One topmost blossom
> That scales the sky ;
> Man, equal and one with me, man that is made of me, man that is I.

So speaks "Hertha"—"the vital principle of matter." This is a dialect of thought that is entirely familiar to the Hindus : it is the famed *Tat tvam asi* ("That art thou") in a new garb. "Man," says Sankara, one of the great thinkers of humanity, "is one with the creative principle." This is precisely what modern philosophers have come to say. Neutral monism is the name they give to this creative unity.

With "Genesis" we enter upon a new adventure of thought and feeling. Although the poem undoubtedly owes something to the marvellous "Hymn of Creation" in the *Rig-Veda,* yet it is, in essence,

unmistakably Manichean. The influence of the Vedic hymn in the opening stanza is beyond dispute :

> In the outer world that was before this earth,
> That was before all shape or space was born,
> Before the blind first hour of time had birth,
> Before night knew the moonlight or the morn ;
>
> Yea, before any world had any light,
> Or anything called God or man drew breath,
> Slowly the strong tides of the heaving night
> Moved, and brought forth the strength of life and death . . .

Are not Swinburne's words an echo of the words of Prajapati ?

Here the Hindu influence ends. The rest of the poem draws from a different source—a source that no critic seems to have pointed out. Let me attempt to make this clear.

At first, it would seem that there is an element of "Christian pessimism" in a portion of Swinburne's "Genesis" ; but a closer scrutiny reveals that this portion is entirely Persian in its inspiration. There is nothing more characteristically Persian than the contrast between the two souls, of light and darkness, of which the germs exist in all. This was no doubt known to the Greeks, and Xenophon in his romance on the education of Cyrus—(Cyropaedia)—introduced it as a touch of "local colour" ! One of the early Greek philosophers, Parmenides, expresses a similar idea in his philosophy : "All is full at once of light and unapparent night, both equal." (This concerns the distribution of phenomena. In actual truth "Being is, not-Being is not.")

The "pessimism" in "Genesis" consists in making a universal law of what has always presented itself as a paradox : the good fortune of the bad and the bad fortune of the good :

> And he that of the black seed eateth fruit,
> To him the savour as honey shall be sweet ;
> And he in whom the white seed hath struck root,
> He shall have sorrow and trouble and tears for meat.

Swinburne was thinking of the particular cases of Jesus and Mazzini. Plato, in his *Republic,* book II, put the case—already probably a popular symbol, like the "suffering servant of God" in Isaiah—of the just man who is thought to be unjust and suffers evil accordingly ; and argues afterwards that he is really much happier than the successful tyrant. Doubtless he had in mind the fate of Socrates.

Shakespeare probably held, with Ecclesiastes, that "Time and chance happen to all men," and that there is no universal law ! Such seems Swinburne's persuasion also :

And each man and each year that lives on earth
Turns hither and thither, and hence or thence is fed;
And as a man before was from his birth,
So shall a man be after among the dead.

The "pessimism" of Swinburne is unequivocal and, in type, is Persian.

Doubtless much could be said of the appeal that the poet's other writings make to the more sensuous temperament of the East; but this is foreign to my present purpose. Any intelligent Asiatic can deal with the topic.

I have concerned myself not with any sweeping charge of plagiarism but with the growth of a sensitive mind. And in the thought that no small part of this growth is traceable to the fertilising contact of Oriental cultures there can be nothing but interest. Swinburne became a free spirit under the influence of the East. RANJEE G. SHAHANI.

PERCEPTION

IT seemed that here and there the air
Stirred to some alien kind.
The dry leaves rattled on the ground
In that hot August wind.
The world had quality of dream,
(A fading dream to me)
Another world would be unfurled
Had I but eyes to see.

Always the prize escaped my eyes
And only sense of change,
To warp and woof of Paradise—
The known to something strange,
Kept me astrain to seek again
For what was out of range.

Though through the day it paled away
The moods still waxed and waned.
Vision by night was plain as sight.
By day but this remained:—
A leaf upon a distant bough
Was bobbing like a bird,
And in the glade a single blade
Waved where no other stirred.

G. E. O. MULLINS.

THE POETRY OF C. DAY LEWIS: AN INTERPRETATION

WHEN the young poets of the late 1920's and early '30's had succeeded in launching their conception of modern life they felt that an explanation of their aims was necessary. This was supplied by one of the foremost of them, Cecil Day Lewis, and bore a self-explanatory title—*A Hope for Poetry*.

Day Lewis acknowledges in this book the influence of Donne, the French Symbolists, Manley Hopkins, Eliot, Owen, and the Great War. He shows how they inherited the legacy of the post-war waste land and the threadbare traditions of the 19th century and the Georgian poetic ideal. He and his fellows had to replace that which had been destroyed by the war and create a new and adequate perspective for themselves.

Eliot had established his own position and viewpoint in the social drought which he had fertilised by a return to Anglican faith and the traditions of an ordered past. Donne, Hopkins, and the Symbolists belonged to the past, and Owen, their nearest contemporary, had died in the war and had made no contact with the problems which confronted the poets of the post-war world. They had only one direction open to to them—the future. Gathering such suitable traditions as were left to them and looking towards a revolutionary future it remained to them to interpret the present in their own way, using their own symbols, and plan for the realisation of that future.

All this, Day Lewis understood and appreciated, and amongst the younger poets he was perhaps the first to decide what his attitude and medium should be. Born in 1904, he was old enough to have known the war and young enough for the pre-war traditions to have little effect upon him. He first endeavoured to compile order amidst the confusion.

Transitional Poem (1929), gives his outlook at that time:

> Now I have come to reason
> And cast my schoolboy clout,
> Disorder I see is without,
> And the mind must sweat a poison
> Keener than Thessaly's brew;
> A pus that, discharged not thence,
> Gangrenes the vital sense
> And makes disorder true.
> It is certain we shall attain
> No life till we stamp on all
> Life the tetragonal
> Pure symmetry of brain.

In this he reveals his need for clear single-mindedness before attempting to tackle the problems of the disorder. He tries to bridge the gap between tradition and revolution in his mind, and directs the impact of the tran-

sitional period into a poetic impulse devoid of sidetracks. He has determined to 'unleash his brain, to sweat after some revelation.'

In *From Feathers to Iron,* (1931), he produced a group of poems written during the months before his child was born. In the use of the child as a symbol of the future he developed and clarified his interpretation of the present and his hope for the future. Here is a more definite note; the transition is almost ended and a new set of values about to be born:

> Now our research is done, measured to a shadow,
> The plains mapped out, the hills a natural bound'ry
> Such and such is our country. There remains to
> Plough up the meadowland, reclaim the marshes.

Or again:

> Here's no meaning but of morning.
> Naught soon of night but stars remaining,
> Sink lower, fade, as dark womb
> Recedes creation will step clear.

He reiterates this idea of a new and fertile land, symbolic of his optimism:

> Shadow takes depth and shape turns solid:
> Far-ranging, the creative eye
> Sees arable, marsh, enclosed and common,
> Assents to multiplicity.
>
> Beautiful brood the cornlands, and you are heavy:
> Leafy the boughs—they also hide big fruit.
> This is my land. I've overheard it
> Making a prómise out of clay.

In *The Magnetic Mountain,* (1933), he turns exclusively to the future, enthusiastic and confident; enthusiasm for the coming social order, confident of its success. He is impatient for the impending revolution:

> Let us be off! Our steam
> Is deafening the dome.
> The needle in the gauge
> Points to a long-banked rage,
> And trembles there to show
> What a pressure's below.
>
> You above all who have come to the far end, victims
> Of a run-down machine, who can bear it no longer:
> Whether in easy chairs chafing at impotence
> Or against hunger, bullies and spies preserving
> The nerve for action, the spark of indignation—
> Need fight in the dark no more, you know your enemies.
> You shall be leaders when zero hour is signalled,
> Wielders of power and welders of a new world.

These three groups of poems took Day Lewis through hesitant valuation, hope and confidence. In them, he achieved his ideal of single-mindedness and built a clear way to the future.

He expressed the same confidence in *A Time to Dance and Other Poems,* (1935). The brilliant future and its revolutionary changes were nearer, and his firm belief in it was strengthened and intensified :

> For all that have won us wings
> to clear the tops of grief,
> My friend who within me laughs
> bids you dance and sing.

He tries again to span the past and future, the ancestor and heir, in "In me, two worlds" :

> In me two worlds at war
> Trample the patient flesh,
> This lighted ring of sense where clinch
> Heir and ancestor.

In this effort at reconciliation he does not wholly succeed, in common with other poets of the thirties who attempted to do the same.

> So heir and ancestor
> Pursue the inveterate feud,
> Making my senses' darkened fields
> A theatre of war.

Amongst this collection is the first of the heroic odes which was the form he used to describe incidents of the Spanish war in later poetry. The theme of this first heroic ode was the flight of Parer and M'Intosh from England to Australia, in 1920. The force and skill with which Day Lewis relates the story of the epic flight, ensures its success where many lesser poets would have relapsed into bathos. The realism and conversational tone gives it momentum :

> And they picked her up out of it somehow
> and put her at the air, a
> Sorry hack for such steeplechasing, to
> leap the sky.
> "We'll fly this bloody crate till it falls
> to bits at our feet,"
> Said the mechanic Parer.

One other poem in this collection deserves individual mention. It is one of those at the end dealing with the industrial waste land. Of the many parodies of Marlowe's "A Passionate Shepherd to his Love," since Raleigh's reply, this is one of the most pungent. It is also a clever link between the romantic poetic ideal and the realistic modern attitude :

Come, live with me and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
Of peace and plenty, bed and board,
That chance employment may afford.

I'll handle dainties on the docks
And thou shalt read of summer frocks:
At evening by the sour canals
We'll hope to hear some madrigals.

Retaining his confidence, *Noah and the Waters,* (1936), was an allegorical verse play the theme of which is the defeat of the old order and its adherants in the still-imminent social revolution. Its form and style resembles that of the medieval morality "Everyman." Everyman is Noah and the waters are the revolutionary tides of popular opinion which will purify England of its reactionary elements:

Behind the image of glass, the mirage of brick, you await
A judgment and a choice. But listen for that which is still
Less than the whisper of clouds assembling, of arrows falling.
But look to him we will call Noah, figure of your fate,
Him understand, him obey.

Noah and the Waters was the end of Day Lewis's stalwart hope of an immediate new order. The years 1936-1938 brought the rapid growth of reactionary ideals and unrest in Europe which brought the Socialists to a defensive halt. Following the lascist drama-reading class of Abyssinia came the Fascist dress-rehearsal in Spain. Europe saw the signs of an impending tragedy and would not believe it. The politicians timidly offered appeasement and non-intervention and turned their faces away from the threatening blow. Poets with no illusions about the social fabric of Europe saw the blow coming and knew that it was aimed directly at all for which they had hoped and worked.

The effect of the Spanish war upon the English poets of the thirties was deep and lasting. The spread of Fascism appalled and alarmed them whilst the stupidity of the "democratic" politicians disgusted and embittered them. Spain became the symbol of the struggle between liberty and slavery in the modern world, varying according to the interpretation made by the poet. Day Lewis stated his attitude in *Authors Take Sides.* In reply to the questions, "Are you for, or against, the legal government and the people of Republican Spain? Are you for, or against, Franco and Fascism?" he replied:

"The struggle in Spain is part of a conflict going on now all over the world. I look upon it quite simply as a battle between light and darkness, of which only a blind man could be unaware. Both as a writer and a member of the Communist Party I am bound to help in the fight against Fascism, which means certain destruction or living death for humanity."

Whilst looking forward with hope and confidence in his brave new world he knew that the future is the child of the present, to be nursed and educated by contemporary events. He therefore always admitted the possibility that the misuse of power could warp the present and wreck the future. Inferences drawn from the Fascist war against Republican Spain brought realisation of the Damoclean danger. Here, perhaps, was another transitional period with no social revolution on the other side. His confidence in the bright future was replaced by the theme of death and the dying freedom of the Spanish people and of mankind. He heard what Louis MacNeice called "the gun-butt raps upon the door."

Overtures to Death and Other Poems (1938), reveals in many symbolic forms the poet's acceptance of the closeness of death. His new pessimism and broken hope speaks in *February, 1936*

> Now to the fire
> From killing fells we bear
> This new-born lamb, our premature desire.
>
> We cannot meet
> Our children's mirth, at night
> Who dream their blood upon a darkening street.
>
> Stay away, Spring!
> Since death is on the wing
> To blast our seed and poison everything.

The optimism of *From Feathers to Iron* with its child-symbol is now replaced by fear and fatalistic certainty of the coming war :

> See the big guns, rising, groping, erected
> To plant death in your world's soft womb.

The eager needle in the gauge is replaced by :

> . . . the glib, habitual breathing
> Of clocks where time means nothing,
> In a condemned mansion.

The rapid, irresistible approach of death, tempting and thrilling when seen from fast cars and airplanes is now viewed in a very different light :

> But there's no time now for spring-cleaning
> Or mending the broken lock,
> We are here in the shrouded drawing-room till
> Your first, your final knock.

The clear outlook which he had cultivated and the success of his Parer and M'Intosh attempt equipped Day Lewis for his heroic ode "The Nabara." The naval battle between the three Basque trawlers and the rebel cruiser *Canarias* aroused the admiration of the world, especially for the trawler *Nabara* which went down fighting to the end. The narrowing of the vision from the major issues of the war to the sinking

of a Basque trawler shows how deeply he felt and understood the Spanish tragedy. Whilst he took the whole war as a symbol he paid tribute to individual gallantry and courage. "The Nabara" includes both aspects :

> Freedom is more than a word, more than the base coinage
> Of statesmen, the tyrant's dishonoured cheque, or the dreamer's mad
> Inflated currency.

And later on :

> Brisk at their intricate batteries the German gun-layers go
> About death's business, knowing their longer reach must foil
> The impetus, break the heart of the government ships, each blow
> Deliberately they aim, and tiger-striped with flame
> Is the jungle murk of the smoke as their guns leap and recoil
> The Newfoundland trawlers feel
> A hail and hurricane the like they have never known
> In all their deep-sea life : they wince at the squalls of steel
> That burst on their open decks, rake them and leave them wrecks,
> But still they fight on long into the sunless afternoon . . .

Much of Day Lewis's best poetry is contained in *Overtures to Death.* In his earlier poetry he was preoccupied with a singleness of mind and purpose followed by a full-blooded confidence in an ideal almost within reach. Now that ideal has receded and the threat of world Fascism faces him and the realisation of the power of the opposing forces has moved him to angry, and often bitter revolt. New values had to be coined, new adjustments made :

> Now we at last have crossed the line
> Where earth's exuberant fields begin.
> That green illusion in the sky
> Born of our desert years can die. . . .
>
> Lord of us all, now it is true
> That we are lords of all but you,
> Teach us the order of our day
> Lest we deface the honoured clay.

As one of the major poets of the period known as "between the wars" Day Lewis's importance lies in his ability to grasp the significance of contemporary events and his capability to use them to the fullest degree. He has displayed a shrewd insight into modern world events and social problems which puts to shame many leading politicians. More important, he has used his knowledge in producing poetry which secures him a place in the front of the poets of this century. ROLAND GANT.

To the Editor, THE POETRY REVIEW.—Please accept my congratulations on the improvements in your (our) publication—the lettering and arrangement of the title page is especially pleasing.—FRANCIS CADOGAN, Commander, R.N., (*Life member of the Poetry Society*).

THE LESSON

I

PREACH to her delicate ears, her wistful eyes,
And teach those fingers arts, darts to the tips
Of her most lovely breasts, and to her thighs
Those motions from which all our story springs,
Preach her and teach her all, that she may be
Beautiful in her nature and happy.
Give her diamonds and dewdrops, and guitars
To flaunt herself to music, and bright clothes
That, naked of them, she may then disclose
A whiter beauty, a more trembling pose.
Give her a violet, a pink, a rose
And pray that she may be as gay as those.
Circled by flowers, by poems, and by stories,
Flattered, painted, and dressed in royal glories,
From the top of her head to bottom toe
She will be beautiful. She will be more.
Wrapped in the beauty of nativity
She will be born again, and constantly.
So should you do with delicate ears and eyes,
So should you preach and practise to her lips.
Perfection never comes to those who seek
It not, nor will it come swift like a rainbow
From mixture of her sun and of her tears.
O it will vanish as her hopes and fears.

II

She is so beautiful, more lovely than
A whole compendium of love's garden.
Do what you will, you cannot make her more so,
Preach, play, or teach. You but garnish her torso,
But none of the effects you wish so plainly
Will come to her. You use your efforts vainly.
Only love her, and then her thighs and eyes
Will blossom in a thousand different ways.
Motions cannot be learnt, nor sweet ears teased
To greater loveliness by pleasantries.
Let her just be herself, that she may be
Beautiful as she is, and more happy.

NICHOLAS MOORE

VILLAGE AT WAR

ALONG the banks of the pavement
are broken walls ;
a painted motto
replaces the scorched vine.

Down the road
a sniper's bullet
and in the empty
courtyard tanks.

Always
tanks.

Down the wind
the smell of hunger
naked in the
market square,

whilst through the houses
tense and sullen
tired men are
taking aim.

Along the banks of the pavement
a broken silence
and broken stones
sadden the body of time.

ALAN ROOK.

THE BLACK NIGHT

JUST the black night,
No pity showing ;
No gleam of light,
Through the wind's blowing.

No use in retreating
To still the heart's beating ;
Vain would be flight
Against the not knowing.

Just the black night,
Not aught bestowing.

PAULINE EMERIC.

FEARFUL QUESTION

"We keep 'em on the ground if we can"—aside, by an officer examining applicants for the Air Forces—keen, qualified, but non-public school.

HOW shall we meet the People,
The dreadful, docile People—
How shall we face the People
Whose sons have stopped the gap ?

Who'll be this war's reporters
But those mean city quarters
Whose bricks the terror mortars
With fragments of their dead ?

Well did their lords defend them
Who now so freely spend them !
How shall the new world friend them
Except they mend the world ?

These who died uncomplaining,
Sat roofless in the raining,
Nor wreaked your treacherous feigning
On you who sold the pass.

Few at the muses' table,
Trained for the engine's stable,
For pickaxe, loom and cable,
Brief morning without dew.

And still their betters drive 'em
In heavy gear, deprive 'em,
If school nor college shrive 'em
Of rankers' common clay.

Now some ride clouds at dawning,
Though no god-fostered morning
Redeemed their youth's impawning
When England's bugles blew.

Has it not earned, this England,
This bitted, bridled England,
Half serf, half child, this England—
Earned, not its spurs but wings ?

REDCLIFFE MCKIE.

TIDINGS

THE baby lambs at Allerford
Are skipping in the sun,
Laughing all down their woolly tails,
Wee bits of frenzied fun.

The apple trees at Allerford
Are wintry yet and bare,
But soon each naked, barren bough
A bridal robe will wear.

The sunny slopes of Allerford,
Greener they grow each day,
And every tree's alive with song
For spring is on the way.

Up in the woods at Allerford
Primroses are astir,
And larches lightly deck themselves
In golden gossamer.

And O, I'll be in Allerford.
(I have not lived in vain,)
When spring, laden with loveliness,
Pitches her camp again.

F. JENNINGS.

BUT BITTER BEAUTY . . . .

I STEPPED out into fairyland—
A city of delight
Washed pure and clean from soil and stain
And robed in spotless white!
So high the moon rode in the sky
A million diamonds sparkled nigh!

But bitter beauty covers all
The sober sepia land,
And silence settles like a pall
At winter's stern command.
The trees are cased in loveliness
More cruel than the meanest dress!

Montreal. CHRISTINE L. HENDERSON.

SWELLFOOT THE TYRANT

AS late upon the wintry moor
I walk'd in cloud and snow,
I met an old man, pinch'd and poor,
Whose steps were dark and slow.

The wind blew through his ragged hair,
And on his shrivell'd skin;
And his cold feet were red and bare,
And, as for grief or sin,

He wore but sackcloth on his loins,
And on his wrinkled breast,—
Such penance as old lore enjoins
For prophets long at rest.

He bore a tall staff of the ash,
To guide him in the sleet;
And his eyes were blind, with horrent gash,
Like the Greek with borèd feet.

"I am that Oidipous," he cried,
"Who sinn'd against his birth,
Witless; but man's accursèd pride
Now sins against the Earth,

Tearing her bowels, as Sin's by Death
Beside the gate of Hell.
So wander I on this white heath
And this waste frozen fell,

Lamenting for the crimes of men,
Who are at war with God,
Slaying their brothers, as did Cain
On the blood-dabbled sod!"

He pass'd into the dark of night,
The cloudland and the snow;
And, where he pass'd, a leprous light
Across the wild did glow.

T. E. Casson.

ENGLAND, 1942

I LOVE you best, my patterned English fields,
When springtime teases you with sun and rain
And jewelled gladness of the woodland yields
A scented burden that should long remain—
When fickle skies, scheming with hasting cloud,
Gather to cast on you a sombre shroud.
Along the rolling surface of the ground
Clear serried lines proclaim that patient days
Have here, lissome and green, an answer found
For those who waited, dour with wistful gaze,
The dormant seeds to prosper. Doubting now
Is ending, stems are springing row on row.

Where are the lithe and stalwart men who drove
Strong teams to plough, where now the shoots are green—
The men of steadfast thought, who grew to love
A land where their forefathers long had been ?
Hard have they striven, tilled the earth with toil,
The tempest to defy with plodding might,
Seeking to gain a harvest from the soil,
Unyielding in the task from morn till night.
Where are they now ? Look far above to see
The airmen droning. Seek the farther shore
And there shall you behold an argosy,
Great ships that through the deepest darkness bore
Full cargoes. Seek still further, 'midst the blare
Of war, and you shall find the ploughmen there.
But some there are, whose hearts with fire did burn,
Who fell, still striving ; these shall not return.

ARTHUR LYNNFORD-SMITH.

IF CHRIST CAME BACK

IF Christ came back ! The question came,
Would the welcome be the same
As meted out to heroes brave,
And honour Him Who died to save ?
Would the Mayor in robes of red
Have the scroll of welcome read,
With flags and banners waving fair,
And trumpeters with loud fanfare,
Or would they allow the Christ to roam
Like a wanderer—without a home ?

Ex-Mayor of Coventry. CHARLES PAYNE.

LOST SAILOR

REST Sailor, rest! Let him no longer strive
With unavailing toil to keep alive;
No hope has he who only knows
The long roll of the sea,
Hearing with crazy mind unceasingly
The waves dull thud, feeling the angry spray,
The heaving and the sway,
The tide that flows.

He will not seek as his companions sought,
By grievous pangs of thirst and hunger wrought,
A doubtful refuge in the deep;
Imagination views
With startled eyes the haunts of shipwrecked crews,
And worse than these, live horrors that abound,
Stirring the slimy ground
Where foul things creep.

Now he is past all fears of sunken wrecks;
No more he thinks of dead men on damp decks,
And roving fish eager for food:
His spirit slipping free,
Losing the salty drops, will henceforth be
In company of happy beings fair,
Glad to encounter there
Nothing but good.

RAYMUND BOURNE.

PRAYER

THUS do I pray:
when we are old,
when we have seen
days yet untold

may we look back
and know not fear.
Until life's end
O may we hear

a larch tree's fire,
a crystal moon
still play to us
the self-same tune.

MARGUERITE EDGELOW.

A WISH

THEY told us how they walked with Him
And blessed and healed and talked with Him
How men and children followed Him
By Tiber's Sea.

Of themselves who broke bread with Him,
How they betrayed and fled from Him,
While thief and soldier turned to Him
Upon a tree.

How women stood and wept for Him
And angels rolled the stone for Him,
Of skies that made a throne, for Him
From Galilee.

I wish that as they wrote of Him
They'd told us how they laughed with Him;
He must have laughed, with heart of Him
So young, so free.

M. SAVIDGE.

THE END OF THE ROAD

There is a road which runs all the way from the South of Mexico to the North of Canada, where it suddenly comes to a purposeless end.

AT last he came to the end of the road
That staggered from Mexico,
Through cactus desert and valley of gourd,
By surf and summit, the struggling road—
Two thousand miles to the land of snow.

The Aztec farms were an age behind,
The mountain canyon, long ago,
He turned a bend of the road to find
One pine tree battered against the wind,
With grasping roots in a drift of snow.

So this is the end, the end of the road,
A rock, a tree and the sea below;
And here a man may forget his load,
There is nothing more, for ill or good,
Save a lone lean pine. It is better so.

CARLA LANYON LANYON.

FULL MOON

THEY march no more, who saw this moon,
When she was young and sickle-small.
They fly no more in frozen dawns
Nor keep the dog-watch in a squall.
They lie in earth, who knew this moon,
When she was frail and crescent-small

And moons and planetary forms
Maintain their cold and constant way,
While lusty-blooded men fling up
Wild arms and fall and die in clay
And see no more the lighted rooms
Of their ambitious yesterday.

They fall in vain, tho' moons may rise
And wax to full and wane to black,
If we avert offended eyes
From horror, with its bloody wrack
And take the wine-spilt, holy lives
And give no burning anger back.

SARAH STAFFORD.

DECEMBER SPRING

SPRING came first in December,
With the sweet butterbur,
And the rare hellebore,
Under the hanging woods
Where the winds roar.

Beyond the budding hedge,
And the furrowed brown tillage,
(Where the hollies burned black,
Dark flames in the sepulchral light)
From the village our furrowed track

Climbed swiftly to the upper air,
Above the hooded hanger
Where winter sweeps the land
In anger, and the wind sings
In the brown grass where we stand.

Your face bent to the wind,
With your stubborn hand
(Brown still from the Summer's sun and surf)
You finger the bleached rabbit's skull,
And pull at the bitten turf :

Body flexed like a spring,
Your hand playing with death,
You are sure of your birthright and the summer land :
The illusive moment binds us, but your eyes
Are turned to a future I shall not understand.

Yours the December Spring, and mine
The empty skull, the sharpening wind ;
For you the new world wakes, draws breath,
For me there is only the long waiting,
The vigil at the Death.

Pte., R.A.M.C. B. J. Brooke.

TO DOROTHEA

Five Year-Old Victim of a Motor Accident

BUD on the tree
At fate's decree
Broken and bruisèd falls ;
We weep for thee,
Whilst thou dost flee
To where the music calls.

Dear child asleep
Smiles softly creep
Over remembered face :
Death builds no wall
That cannot fall
At mem'ry of thy grace.

Sweet be thy sleep,
Dreamless and deep,
Blossom that faded soon :
Sorrow will pass ;
Farewell, alas,
Poesies thou hast bestrewn !

Harry Sefton.

THE PATRIOT

WITH peaceful men who valued life,
Who loved the joy that living brings,
I, hating War, yet armed for Strife,
To save from doom the sacred things.
More dear than life our idols prove,
Though life we forfeit with a sigh,
We will to save the things we love
Upon the blood-stained ramparts die.

Amid the carnage and the fray
I've fought for that I'll never see,
I will not live beyond the day
To taste the feasts of victory;
But I'm content to die to-night
If future years will reap the gain,
No heritage of human right
Was gained without some human pain.

The stars of the impassive night
Look down upon a solemn scene,
And foes who fought a fiendish fight
Lie close as if no strife had been;
In death the enemies are one,
Though each the other's blood has shed,
They now together slumber on,
Forever share a warrior's bed.

In this arena of the slain
Heroic men fought on alone,
Their gallant deeds no laurels gain,
They died unnoticed and unknown.
The nameless host who turned the tide
For them oblivion must suffice,
Lost in the avalanche they died,
Mute martyrs in the sacrifice.

Mars, clad in gay magnificence,
In times of Peace its might parades,
In all the pride of consequence
March the glittering cavalcades;
When lifeless victims strew the plains,
And War reveals its misery
The memory of martial strains
Re-echo like a mockery.

How dear the vision in my eyes
Of things which in the world have birth,
The beauty that in Nature lies
When twilight sighs farewell to earth.
The summer and the autumn hours,
The time when Spring assumes her dress,
And in the promise of her flowers
To all the world gives loveliness.

Here in the mire of death and blood
I die that fragrant flowers may grow,
Perhaps from this empurpled flood
Unsullied streams of love will flow.
What tragedy our lives to give
For that our souls in vain will sigh,
The things for which we wish to live
Are the ideals for which we die.

LESLIE GREENE.

I LEFT YOU AT DAWN.....

I LEFT you at dawn
When the sun was drifting like a shy stranger,
And you said it could last no longer
And there was sadness in your tone.

I knew you were torn
Between what might not happen and what might happen,
You did not laugh and your voice was not open,
You thought that your soul was gone.

I wanted to scorn
Your decision . . . but knew you were right,
It was useless to continue the fight . . .
Darkness was nearly done.

I left you at dawn,
I turned into mist to hide you and walked by the stream,
I was lost in the vapour that blew from the water and heard in a dream
My footsteps crunching the stone.

RONALD WESTBROOK.

POETRY AND POLITICS

TO Milton, Professor Wilson Knight says[1], the office of poet and the actions of nations are interdependent. And rightly, although to a surface view poetry and politics seem wholly divorced. But the truth is that unless the political sphere can become impregnated with the central wisdom found in the sphere of great poetry, there can be no hope for the future of civilisation. The ideal is to raise, by this vital impregnation, politics (the term used here in the fully inclusive sense, embracing all governmental and State affairs and therefore the total well-being—or otherwise—of the people), to the level achieved only through an understanding of the laws implicit in poetry, and revealed more explicity through Christianity. It is true that when the great poet, or prophet descends into the blood-soaked arena of political controversy he prostitutes his art, and he should not so descend: Milton is greatest when writing sublime poetry not when engaged on political pamphleteering, no matter how high his motive in such activity. The difficulty is subtle, and *how* to elevate the political sphere to an awareness of the sphere of poetry remains the pressing problem. Possibly we dare not hope for any quick solution. But Mr. Knight's book clearly points a way.

Throughout this study of Milton's work and its relation to contemporary problems, the urgent plea is for a recognition of the royal powers of the imagination. The symbol of sovereignty recurrent in Mr. Wilson Knight's writings needs much fuller understanding than it has yet received, since it points towards the day when man will have assimilated the realisation of his true selfhood and semi-divine nature, and that day will announce the transformation of life as we now know it; in fact, will proclaim the arrival of the long-awaited "Kingdom of Heaven." But conditional on that attainment is the fulfilment of the other clauses in the Lord's Prayer, chief among them the necessity for forgiveness. This book, in its subtle and profound awareness of, and consequent sympathy with, the complexities of human life and the problems which lead to the tragedy of war, is born of this essential spirit, and for that reason alone demands the respect and attention not merited by far too many contemporary writings on this tangled theme.

"The spirit of poetry," Mr. Knight says, "lies close to those best ideals for which Milton laboured, and both are of Christ" (p. 24). He suggests that Milton and Shakespeare stand at the heart of the English nation both in war and in peace, offering an oracular wisdom. He remarks that to many this appears absurd. Which is sadly true. Poets are only too conscious of the fact that, in England especially, poetry is generally neglected and slighted, and, in view of the high destiny of England—which Mr. Knight declares both Shakespeare and Milton

[1] *Chariot of Wrath*, G. Wilson Knight (Faber, 10/6)

saw and revealed so clearly—this attitude is nothing less than disastrous.

Although, like Browning, Milton was "ever a fighter," he was no lover of war. The arguments advanced by Christ in *Paradise Regained,* and various passages in *Paradise Lost*[1], prove his awareness of the ultimate futility of the war-method, though even so great a mind as his seems to have become confused on the issue of destruction when he writes of the "just and true valour" which "uses the necessity of war and dominion not to destroy but to prevent destruction" *(History of Britain).* The palpable inconsistency of the policy of destruction in order to prevent destruction (like the ideal of "war to end war") lies indeed at the root of the war-method, and the fallacy will have to be fully faced and stressed during future attempts at establishing a permanent peace. Unfortunately, in its present state of evolution the human race is almost wholly ignorant of, and therefore mistrusts and fears, logical thought and consistent principles. This will have to be learned. Although strongly pacific in intention and desire, Milton fought throughout his life with the weapon well-known to be mightier than the sword, and in his battle with evil had no choice but to make free and frequent use of war-like imagery ; the difficulty here being similar to that experienced in describing any mystical experience : in such description erotic imagery is the only imagery available ; in description of spiritual conflict (*i.e.,* in the battle against "the devil and all his works") bellicose imagery only can be used. Concepts for which equivalent words have not been discovered must obviously be expressed in the only language we have at our disposal. The incarnation is always difficult ; the spirit cannot take on flesh in an adequate form, and the body speaks and acts but haltingly.

> All Milton's impassioned reasoning . . derives from his one consuming desire to realise power with goodness and a union of freedom with dominion, to create a national integrity and a national soul-energy that may in a flash resolve "all sects and schisms" in one Christ-like blaze expanding over all nations on earth the kingdom of righteousness (p. 168).

Mr. Knight makes it clear that, to Milton, England was a Messiah-nation, the nation destined to play the rôle of world-regenerator. Whether this idea be true or false, its full acceptance would bring to the nation conscious of so divine an ideal the saving health for which we pray, and hence to all the nations of the world. But it is infinitely more difficult for a whole nation to become aware of its destiny than for an individual, and for an individual it is hard enough. "Many are called, but few are chosen." Only the finally chosen are able to respond to the divine call, and it will be a titanic task to infuse awareness of such a call into the body of people which constitutes a nation. However, the remoteness of the

[1] *e.g.,* Bk. II, 11, 496-505

goal is of small account ; awareness of the goal is all, and, to the long view, immediate victory or defeat may be immaterial. Mr. Knight reminds us that his arguments are "not rigid but dynamic," and "whether we win or lose, the statement holds," the statement being that only by attention to the wisdom of the poets and the root-faith of Christianity (the two are really interdependent), will any enduring peace or progress be possible.

"Is it too much," Mr. Knight asks, "to expect reverence for the fruits of poetic wisdom, that delicate but indestructible flower ? Must prophecy at this late hour, remain dead ? New energies are needed, a new respect for power in all its heirarchies, a new faith" (pp. 191, 192). The new respect for power, however, must never lose sight of the danger of power (even—perhaps especially—spiritual power), unless rightly dedicated. Power, like freedom, is safe only under the direction of the "only Ruler of princes," He, to whom "the nations are as a drop of the bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance." Power commonly overlooks this essential allegiance, forgetting that true power is conditional on humility, and until these conditions are understood, there can be no enduring hope of peace on earth. The central wisdom is found in great poetry, in all great art, which is, and has been throughout the ages, "news of God."

DALLAS KENMARE.

GOD MOVES IN A MYSTERIOUS WAY . . .

HOW strange, in gangrene, guts and blazing sod ;
In vicious wounds of clotted clay ;
In twisted tank ; through ruptured air ; by retching rod—
To-night—to-day,
Men find God !

How proud is God to know, His son, in pain,
Died not in vain . . .
But poured his warm sweet blood
Into the mud—
Into the battle's bloody drain :
The whirling Hellish hole
That sucks the body down
To drown . . .
But leaves, quite free to float, the Soul !

L/Sgt., A.A. ALAN SCOTT.

IN MEMORIAM

Canadian soldier, valorous and true,
Whose feet have trod the downward road to death,
When day was at the dawn and love was new,
Ere the dark foeman stopped your singing breath;
You walk no more when summer blows again
In dim Acadian orchards, blossom-sweet,
Nor glimpse the nebulous silver of the rain,
Nor shafted sunlight on the prairie wheat.

We shall remember—though the spirit falters,
Though once again our mighty legions give
The unspent flame of youth on England's altars,
That truth and freedom live.

You wake no more to the long days' achieving,
Nor virulence of war's marauding breath;
To the sword unsheathed and the heart's impassioned grieving
Swift-merged again in death.

Unbounded now, the frontiers of the dawning
Are yours to glimpse, fulfilment yours to know,
On fairer strands where breaks no sombre warning
Of distant drums below.

Where peace for evermore her tryst is keeping
Beyond the tumultuous sky, the shell-torn hill;
To that far bourne, secure from wars and weeping,
Your voices call us still.

Winnipeg. IRENE CHAPMAN BENSON.

LOVE CAME SOFTLY

LOVE came softly
On wings of air,
Before (*so* softly)
I knew him there
He came.

Had not a moth's wing
My cheek upon
Turned my eyes westward
He even had gone
(So softly he came
So silently) 'ere
(Hearing no sound)
I was aware.

Bournemouth. DOROTHY BIRCH.

DYNAMICS OF AMERICAN POETRY: XCIII

There are interesting things to tell of W. R. Rogers. He is a young Ulster man and *Awake!* (Harcourt, Brace, New York) was first published in England in 1940, but the entire edition was destroyed in an enemy bombing, it was reset and published last July, and reviewed in our November issue; the first printing sold out immediately (Secker). This young poet is described by Mark Van Doren as the "war poet of this war." In the redundance of his lines and the richness of his imagination, he would be a little dazzling for the ordinary reader. He enjoys beside the play of idea, the play of words. They are not just words—they are words *sauté,* they are *à la reine,* they are *bonne femme.*

Mr. H. L. Davis swam into the know of readers in 1935, when *Honey in the Horn* won the Harper's prize. The west is his *mis en scène* where tired women, cattle-men and sheep-herders, river and waterfront people wander through the seasons. Mr. Davis is likened in his descriptions of his homeland to Robert Frost. In *Proud Riders* (Harper & Bros., New York), as a narrator Mr. Davis excels where characters become more important than blowing grasses, green willows and such. We give the title poem;

We rode hard, and brought the cattle from brushy springs,
From heavy dying thickets, leaves wet as snow;
From high places, white-grassed and dry in the wind;
Draws where the quaken-asps were yellow and white,
And the leaves spun and spun like money spinning.
We poured them on to the trail, and rode for town.

Men in the fields leaned forward in the wind,
Stood in the stubble and watched the cattle passing.
The wind bowed all, the stubble shook like a shirt.
We threw the reins by the yellow and black fields, and rode,
And came, riding together, into the town
Which is by the gray bridge, where the alders are.
The white-barked alder trees dropping big leaves
Yellow and black, into the cold black water.
Children, little cold boys, watched after us—
The freezing wind flapped their clothes like windmill paddles.
Down the flat frosty road we crowded the herd:
High stepped the horses for us, proud riders in autumn.

Alice Hunt Bartlett.

[We fear additions to this long continued and distinguished feature have been lost in transit. —Ed.]

MAJOR CULLEN JONES REPLIES

I enjoyed both the mood and content of Mr. Stephenson's "reply." The mood indicates breadth of character—a characteristic that I am told connotes a dimensional contradiction of depth. Furthermore, in his comparison of the quoted lines from Tennyson with those of Eliot, he came nearer convincing me than through any previous argument. Unfortunately, however, I remain a victim of plain North American density.

To some, density suggests *reinforced concrete.* May I admit that I do desire "reinforced concrete" in poetry? It is my understanding that said reinforcement insures a greater strength. Poetically speaking, Shakespeare has a greater strength. If things equal to the same thing are equal to each other, Shakespeare's poetry is a literary manifestation of "reinforced concrete."

In furtherance of density, may I, in a Stephensonian mood, dash off two (modern) lines of sheer genius:

"Garlic, garlic, garlic!
O garlic!"

By personal connotation one may envisage a garlic-eating Senorita; thus we may have a love lyricism comparable to "Where art thou, Romeo?" Or again they may speak tragedy: stiletto-carrying Senor breathing his hot (garlic) breath on the nape of one's extended neck. But unfortunately, it may merely suggest seasickness to some late steerage passenger; or, believe it or not, a mere vegetable that lends a palatable flavor or allergic nausea. As a matter of honest opinion, I fear that the latter reactions are in predominance with the majority of the readers of THE POETRY REVIEW.

At any rate, Mr. Stephenson's "reply" reached me April 27th. After a hard day's work, I read it and was refreshed.

Fort Douglas, Utah, April 30th. CULLEN JONES.

A NOTE BY CLIFFORD BAX

Few things could please me so much as to find people becoming excited about poetry, especially in the middle of a great war. Dr. Shahani's recent article in THE POETRY REVIEW, in which he made a comparison between Shakespeare and Kalidasa, has elicited protests from a lady in London and a gentleman in Cheam.

The lady is annoyed because Dr. Shahani regards Kalidasa as a more spiritual dramatist than Shakespeare, a point about which I should have thought that there could be no dispute. The Indian's work is religious throughout. Shakespeare's religious or mystical sense was at least intermittent. But this lady seems also to have gathered that Dr. Shahani thinks that Kalidasa was the greater dramatist of the two. I handed my copy of the article to a friend and therefore cannot refer to it, but I should be surprised if Dr. Shahani holds that opinion. And suppose he does? What can we say? How many of us can read Sakuntala in the original? The English versions are very poor indeed. Let us remember, too, that Goethe went so far as to say that Sakuntala was the most beautiful play in the world.

The gentleman from Cheam might be furious with me for quoting Goethe, seeing that his wrath with Dr. Shahani springs from the unco-operative spirit of India's Congress. He feels that no Indian poet should be exalted until India's politicians more resolutely oppose Japan. The attitude of Congress, however, cannot possibly affect the value of literary work, nor can Kalidasa, who died before Constantine accepted Christianity, be held responsible for the attitude of Congress. The gentleman from Cheam is probably right in deploring the behaviour of Congress, but he should not have allowed himself to say that Dr. Shahani's article is "illiterate rubbish" and has "no literary merit whatever." These are resounding words, I admit. They are also somewhat ridiculous to those who, like myself, are well acquainted with Dr. Shahani and his work. He is one of the most literate men of my acquaintance.

And if he really does prefer his poet to ours, why should we be surprised? It would be surprising if he did not. Of course, though we cannot read his poet except through opaque translations, we feel certain that he is wrong: but the sensible next step would be to ask him to give us a new and adequate English version of what is undoubtedly a masterpiece. He is so literate that he could supply it—better, perhaps, than any other living writer. CLIFFORD BAX.

LOVE AND LYRICISM

The Philosophy of Love by Dallas Kenmare. (Williams & Norgate, 7s. 6d.)
Youth and the Swallows by Eva Dobell. (The Favil Press, 3s.)
I Wonder by Pauline Emeric. (The Favil Press, 4s. 6d.)
Collected Peoms by Henry W. Clark, D.D. (Williams & Norgate, 5s.)
The Hope of the Dawn by Edwyn Bevan. (Allen & Unwin, 3s.)
Songs of My Heart by the Rt. Hon. Godfrey Locker-Lampson, P.C. (Murray).
Spindrift and Spunyarn by W. Curran Reedy. (The Fortune Press, 5s.)
Gleams Britain's Day by Harry Clifton. (Duckworth, 12s. 6d.)

The most interesting of these books is Miss Kenmare's prose work, *The Philosophy of Love,* which, in many ways, provides a theme for most of the succeeding volumes. In it she shows herself possessed of keen perception, broad sympathy, and sometimes profound penetration: she has travelled much "in the realms of gold," and has a mass of well-chosen quotations to support her arguments: lastly, she is a fine and sensitive critic. The worst charge than can be brought against her is that she is rather too bookish: in her analysis of love, she deals mainly with the loves of poets, stressing the difference of temperament that exists between them and the ordinary Philistine mortal.

The theme of her work is that the world's ills are caused by lack of love: not only does "each man kill the thing he loves" but the thing he loves quite as often kills him. Conversely, the cure for earth's diseases is love: other remedies are to her "palliatives merely to relieve the symptoms." She draws the distinction between sex and love, spiritual love and carnal love, but seems not fully to grasp the great truth uttered by Ronald Knox in one of his recent books: love is the subordination of self, and passion the assertion of self (or words to this effect). Although travelling in the right direction, Miss Kenmare seems to lose herself, now and again, in confused cul-de-sacs. But it is a refreshing change to find a book which offers something other than economics and "new-orders" as a solution for our troubles; and the only regret is, that among so many well-chosen quotations, she has omitted the lovely lines on the nature of love, by Lucretius, in his poem "De Rerum Natura."

Miss Dobell's modest collection of poems, *Youth and the Swallows,* a gathering in of pieces that have been printed in various magazines (including THE POETRY REVIEW), makes us thankful that their author took the trouble to put them between one cover. It is the best of the seven volumes of poetry I have before me. Her work is much influenced by that of the late Humbert Wolfe; one of her best poems commemorates his death, another the emotions aroused by reading his "Requiem." Not only Wolfe's exquisite lyricism, with its undertones of Heine, but also Tennyson, whose long rippling rhythms fall like soft waves on a shore, seems to have had some share in moulding her consistently good technique:

> "Or like some quiet stream where lilies be,
> Lapping among the rushes tranquilly,
> Winding through twilit meadows to the sea?"

Her travel pictures are, in some ways, among the best pieces in the book, especially "On Medieval Italy," "Swallows Over the Arno," "At Assisi," "Outside St. Mark's, At Noon." It is impossible to illustrate the merits of this volume by one or two quotations, but the following, from the beautiful "In Keats' Garden," will show something of her style's qualities :

"Through the autumnal stillness slowly fall
Thy leaves, pale golden patens on the grass ;
Deep-drifted as the years beyond recall.
Beauty abides though all things change and pass.
Dream on, old tree, in this dim place alone.
Thy lovers are gone hence. Thy nightingale has flown."

Miss Emeric's *I Wonder,* a harvest of POETRY REVIEW and *Poetry of To-day* sowings, is of an entirely different quality. Her style is more conversational, even colloquial ; she has touches of humour ; her sense of metre is capricious, and sometimes clumsy as in "The Wishing Well"; her sense of rhyme is keen, but sometimes marred by the Edith Sitwellian fault of rhyming for rhyming's sake. But there is a restraint and gentleness in her best poems which more than compensates her faults. In "The Victim" (from *Poetry of To-day*) she gets closer to the war attitude of the present than most of the poets I have read, but I think her best poem, and a very lovely little thing it is too, "The Starlings":

"A cloud ! A rush
Of wind ! that wheels as by one commanding,
And bursts into innumerable wings.
"A momentary hush
Upon the dusky landings,
And then ! innumerable murmurings."

This poem epitomizes the grace, charm, and delicacy which characterise Miss Emeric's best work.

The two best poems in Dr. Clark's collection are, to my mind, "Good Friday Evening" and "Pilate," the latter quite a strong dramatic study in the Browning manner. His poems are full of strength and vigour, gravity and stateliness : the worst fault is the use, in a number of his poems, of a somewhat dated poetic vocabulary. But he has some good passges, as in "Good Friday Evening":

"Pale light poured down in a noiseless broad cascade
Of molten silver earthwards ; church and spire
Across the street with tremulous motion swayed
In moon-made shimmering tissues of white fire."

Mr. Bevan bears the burden of his Hellenic learning with grace and dignity : he does not load his verse with the fruits of his scholarly labours, though the poems are distinctly classical in tone. His best work is in the translations of Leconte de Lisle's sonnet and St. Bernard's hymn, "Hora Novissima," but an extract from "Helen" will show his smooth, dignified style :

"The moon's thin splendour lifted high,
Argent, inviolate,
Above the bar of a sanguine sky—
So seems she moving delicate,
Where the dead lie."

Songs of My Heart, the successor of his previous volume, *Poems to Baa,* seem to belong to a time we have now forgotten, but they are none the less delightful for that. Leaving the bull-ring of strenuous politics, Commander Locker-Lampson goes out into the evening to woo, with soft serenades, the gentle muse. His two volumes of love poems seem to be a charming variation on a theme by Miss Dallas Kenmare. He moves gently and gracefully in traditional metres, humming, not singing :

"There's music in the air, ethereal chords,
While through the trembling leaves phantasmal light
Dapples the darkness of the summer night."

Another book of poems by a man of action, this time a sailor, is *Spindrift and Spunyarn* by W. Curran Reedy. The robe of a long line of British sea-singers has descended on his shoulders and he wears it well. After this book has received so many splendid reviews in papers both literary and nautical, and has been praised by such eminent men, including John Masefield and Commander S. King-Hall, it would be an impertinence for an insignificant land-lubber to say more. Perhaps the best praise I can give is that, while reading, one can smell the salt tang of the sea.

The publishers of the last volume claim that it is longer and more sustained than the work usually produced by the younger poets its greatest fault is that it is far too sustained. His highly modern technique is apt to become prose ; its rhyming lapses into mere jingling ; and there are dreadful bouts of a sort of indiscriminate punning. When, through sheer exhaustion, it becomes simple, the whole is improved. But one has to search for these golden needles in a bewildering haystack.

James R. Blyth.

A CORNERSTONE OF VERSE

Poetry of the present day is a far more free element than that of, say, fifty years ago. It is less tied by poetic convention and its choice of subject is more varied and elastic.

Bearing this in mind, there is, I feel, a danger to disassociate some passages of good prose from the world of verse. The changing metre and added scope of poetry has formed an essential and binding link between the two elements. True there is much prose which is as cut off and remote from poetry as the cities are from the mountains. But there are, and this very definitely so, passages of prose which are so closely allied to their cousin mode of expression as to become what Oscar Wilde termed : "prose poems." Wilde was a master of this art ; his letters contained many examples of it and I cannot help feeling that only a very narrow margin made "Reading Gaol" a poem and not a piece of unusually expressive prose, possessing all the qualities of a good poem. For what are these qualities ? The art of extracting drama from the ordinary and semi-ordinary, a luscious brilliance of verbal usage which makes

every line a climax unto itself and, behind everything, an incidental music which creates an atmosphere which is physical almost as much as it is intellectual.

That, then, is the relationship between verse and prose and, remembering it, let us harp back to a recent article by Spender decrying the lack of war poets and the insufficiency of war poetry. His main quibble, I recall, is that the poet does not associate himself with war: he merely views it from an external and abstract attitude. This may be so; with the possible exception of Rook's *Dunkirk*, I should not be prepared to dispute it. But what I would say to Spender is that I came across the other day, a volume by Eric Linklater entitled *Cornerstones* (Macmillan) which offers, to my mind, a most effective prose poem compromise solution.

The major part of this volume, an argument between Lincoln, Lenin, Confusius and an R.A.F. pilot in Elysium, need not concern us, brilliant though it be. For, although it contains much sound reasoning, logic and philosophy, it has no poetic content. What does concern us, however, is a long passage at the end representing a bird's-eye view of the war, as seen through the Elysian television system. This might so easily be a series of journalistic, photographic notes. But it is not: it contains such a quality of feeling, emotional and inside war association as to render it, from any point of view, Spender-proof.

As a prose poem, it is supreme for its wealth of beautiful verbal combinations, a zest of poetic description and a serenity of dignity and power which make it very close to the sublime.

Let us reprint this passage from it: of Russia:—

> "Valour leaping, bayonet pointed. A mass of men dwarfing all the history of arms. Lenin's town defended by new Trojans. In silence, behind the German lines, in a forest of cinder-trees and mast of ashes, a gaunt patrol of partisans: wolf sortie, capture of supply wagons. Resolution lives upon its faith. In a deserted town rain melts the long since clotted blood upon its pavements."

To read:

Valour leaping,
Bayonet pointed!
A mass of men dwarfing
All the history of arms.

Lenin's town defended
By new Trojans
In silence, behind
The German lines
In a forest of cinder trees
And mast of ashes
A gaunt patrol of partisans.
Wolf sortie,
Capture of supply wagons.

Resolution lives
Upon its faith . . .

In a deserted town
Rain melts
The long since clotted blood
Upon its pavements . . .

Perhaps abrupt, perhaps, in some ways, lacking in the musical smoothness of verse—a piece of prose, written for prose and with no other motif. This reprint in the shape of *vers libre* may be an unkind and shady trick to play upon it. But I do not think so. There is something here which can compete with the best of the *vers libre* writers of to-day and can withstand the harsh transformation from prose shape to verse shape. This note of poetry runs throughout the entire passage, everywhere there is the sombre music of war and devastation, backed up by a triumphant note of challenge and hope. Here is a man who has flung his emotions into the war and looks down upon them with a tenderness which, in its turn, reveals them with an almost blinding brilliance of descriptive merit. Here is the answer to the call for a war poet, by one who is a prose genius possessing the noblest qualities of the poet. May it live on, when others are forgotten, and may the world have an opportunity to read it and pay homage to an achievement in prose poetry.

Lt., 30th Foresters. RICHARD GARRETT.

A NOTE ON STURGE MOORE (*See page 211*)

There are at least four Sturge Moores: Sturge Moore the poet, Sturge Moore the thinker, Sturge Moore the art critic, and Sturge Moore the literary appreciator. Each of these—it is a case of *un et multiple*—has produced work of sterling merit. The poet has to his credit a dozen or so really beautiful poems, which I think will endure. Take, for instance, "The Gazelles." This is a gorgeous creation, combining beauty of texture with beauty of ideas . . . The thinker does not jaw philosophy, his own or that of others, but crystallizes his apprehensions of reality into fiery particles which glow in his writings, even in the notes which he sometimes affixes to his poems, like patines of bright gold. But that is not all. Sturge Moore has written a book the like of which, so far as I know, no Englishman has given us. This is *Provocations*, a series of meditations on art and life. With the possible exception of some things from the pen of Count Keyserling, I know of no modern work so deep and so true; yet, odd to relate, it is still "on the stocks." I hope some discerning publisher, here or in America, will realise its importance and bring it out—war or no war. First things must always come first . . . . Sturge Moore's art criticism is of a high quality, though I must say that his *obiter dicta* about the creative efforts of the East are not particularly happy. His vision is too Europe-bounded to see the glory and grandeur of the Orient. I am an admirer of the Western experiment with life, but I cannot say that it is complete or ultimately satisfying. However, all of us have our blind spots . . . Sturge Moore's literary appreciations are first-rate. No lover of fine things can afford to neglect *Amour for Aphrodite* or *Art and Life*, two of the subtlest and strongest books of our times . . . It seems that there is a fifth Sturge Moore, the author of poetical plays. Frankly, I have not read these. But I have gone through the dialogue "Mountain Air." It is a real *bi jou*, uniting in a wonderous whole richness of mind, delicacy of feeling and surprising felicities of language. As we read on, we are carried along on a river of rhythmic energy, which leads us from the world of eye and touch to lands of high romance. An achievement, this. I commend this little masterpiece to one and all. Also, I am particularly grateful to the Editor of THE POETRY REVIEW for publishing it. I have seen nothing so good for a long time . . .

But, perhaps, I am doing a disservice to Sturge Moore by praising his work so wholeheartedly; but, then, I have always believed in being perfectly frank. And then, it is high time that this Master's gifts were recognised and publicly acclaimed. English criticism, with some notable exceptions, is becoming more and more commercialized, cliquey and corrupt. Alas! Alas! RANJEE G. SHAHANI.

WAR POETRY AND CRITICISM

I THINK some sort of a reply is due to Mr. T. E. Casson, for his comment on my corrections is likely to give rise to further misunderstanding. If a certain moorland poem of mine is "touching," I think his letter shows him somewhat "touchy"—particularly as I said nothing ill about his writing as a whole. His article on W. W. Gibson was a good article, a generous article, and well written; but he made a bad biographical slip, and committed himself to a slap-dash statement which could be read as an error and contradiction of established literary fact—one involving my blistered self as well as other people. And perhaps I ought to have added that though Gibson's *Battle* was a civilian publication and written before he was accepted for service in the Army, it was the first book of verse to deal with the actualities of war from the seamy side, and though only second-rate, had a very large sale, and so, I daresay, exercised some slight influence upon the war-poems of Sassoon and others. Perhaps I owe some sort of apology to Mr. Casson for my roughness, but I feared at the time he had "done it on purpose," for, amidst so much lyrical and critical "tripe" (both with and without the onions) it is often difficult to detect the wilful and deliberately perverse from the innocent and vernally ignorant.

It is rather over a year since I first entered the pages of THE POETRY REVIEW, doing this for other reasons than those generally associated with Poetry and Literary Criticism; and as a hard-bitten and disillusioned free-raider of too many years' accumulation I will make so bold as to comment also on articles by Mr. Nicholas Moore and Captain Alan Rook, which appeared in the May-June issue along with mine. Now for Captain Alan Rook I have the greatest respect, for I admire his well-written and carefully balanced criticism, and have read some of his sensitive and intellectual flat verse with pleasure. I do not always agree with his point of view, but am attracted by his sincerity and logical outlook, so perhaps he will not be angry with me when I tell him that Truth is an old cracked penny with two sides to it, "heads or tails," but that in no sense is it ever a modern tin medal. His review of Mr. Geoffrey Faber's *Buried Stream* I dare not criticise, for I have not yet read the book; but I *have* read the *First Poems* of Richard Elwes, and though Captain Rook is not actually unkind to him, I think he is unkind to his public. Richard Elwes is the best seller among the soldier poets (indeed I think he is selling nearly as well as Rupert Brooke did during the last war) and without any attempt to play to the gallery has managed to give the public at least a part of what it wants. His "traditional heroics" are obviously not only written in complete sincerity, but express the genuine feelings of a considerable section of the multitude, without which impulses it would be impossible for us, the British, to carry on the War against our common Enemy. Richard Elwes has obviously not yet found his own voice and is rather too transparently influenced by Milton and Rupert Brooke and Shakespeare's sonnets, but his verses are sufficiently good poetry (as Captain Rook seems to concede, if somewhat unwillingly) and are the real thing to a lot of bewildered people who cannot possibly get any wine

and bread out of Modernism. I think, of course, that Alun Lewis is a much better poet, but it is not unlikely that Richard Elwes will develop beyond him. And in all fairness, I think it is also necessary to say that very many of Richard Elwes's "traditional heroics" do not deal with the War at all, but with the theme of Love.

As regards your somewhat pontifical young poet-critic, Nicholas Moore, I recently read two attractively written lyrics of his in a good anthology of new verse entitled *The Living Stone,* and so am very surprised that he should so badly trip over the last rung of the ladder in his "Problem of Form." His article is unusually interesting, but he nearly spoils the main part of it by saying of the contents of Anne Ridler's anthology, *A Little Book of Modern Verse,* that "most of the poetry is extremely strict formally." Now, I don't believe that either Anne Ridler or Eliot will quite agree with that (at any rate not subconsciously or spiritually) for it is quite clear that over fifty per cent. of the anthology is formless in a variety of ways. "Form" is all Mr. Nicholas Moore has written, but it is still something more, for it is the quality of *memorableness,* the quality whereby a stanza or whole poem sticks readily to the brain. Poetry that displays strict qualities of Form is not only fairly easy to read and enjoy, but also easy to remember, content and technique being inextricably interwoven—and who can say that of even half the verse in *A Little Book of Modern Verse,* which is full of heavy and wobbly lines, broken images, baffling figures of speech, disconnection, strange or wrong grammar, false logic, insufficient puncuation, and even passages that look like deliberately written nonsense. But not all of Eliot's verse is formless, and I except, of course, such a gorgeous piece of nonsense-verse as Louis Macneice's "Bagpipe Music," which goes with a fine swing and manages to communicate something, but I do not except Macneice's wabbly and waddly "Autumn Journal" extracts.

Again, Mr. Nicholas Moore says of certain new poets, "Under the tutelage of Laura Riding and Robert Graves they have particularly interested themselves in the formal art of poetry." His shot would have come a little nearer the bull's eye if he had written "the formal art of general diction," or "the formal art of phrase and sentence," or "the art of word technique," though all this applies to Robert Graves rather than Laura Riding, who is a cuckoo-poet, and one whose largest egg was hatched in the one-time linnet nest of Robert Graves. Indeed, she is sometimes a mere Dadaist—which means "leg-pulling" and writing below the line instead of above it. Again, Nicholas Moore's coupling of Swinburne with Dylan Thomas ("the wildly brilliant language of Swinburne or Dylan Thomas") strikes me as overpoweringly funny, for Swinburne, however poetically unsatisfactory he was at times in his brilliance, *always* wrote above the line, while Dylan Thomas writes more often below the line than above it, and is a great "Joke," one who contrives to make a number of people laugh at poetry as a "mug's game." (By the way, in this connection it is interesting to note that the first series of Laura Riding's collected poems was entitled *Poems: A Joking Word.*)

After that kind of wrong commenting it is not surprising to find Nicholas Moore writing of John Masefield that his new book is "scarcely better than doggerel," with

the additional statement "I can only advise that it goes back for re-pulping." Is it necessary to remind Mr. Moore that John Masefield is poet-laureate and has been the most widely read English poet of this century, and to remind him also that the "Georgians" when they wrote about him particularly distinguished themselves in that kind of backstairs criticism, most of which has been proved false. They would, of course, have continuously praised him or left him cordially alone, only there was nothing to be got out of him, seeing that he shepherded no ruling clique, and didn't edit a magazine for the publication of poetry, and controlled no poetry book-shop or prominent publishing house. So they were free to indulge their jealousy and fat-headed opportunism without injury to pocket or puffed-up reputation. Some of us who are of the same breed as John Masefield, and maybe quite as good, have not been a quarter as fortunate, but that is no reason why we should dash into the face of reasonable public opinion and belittle books which in every instance contain at least something that is admirable. Things have not changed, it is only positions that have changed, so that what was once belly and front is now backside. And I think that Nicholas Moore will agree with me when I say that it is Jealousy, Opportunism, Perversity, Revenge, Defeatism, Fear and Greed which to-day largely control current criticism, and perhaps even something still worse. For as one of the finest and best-known of our living poets wrote to me the other day, "It is strange that so lean and bitter a trade as Poetry should attract hypocrites, but it does." I think that into that sentence has gone a whole world of heavenly denunciation, and one that explains more than half the trouble from which we are suffering.

22 Batchwood View, St. Albans. HERBERT PALMER.

THE SUPREMACY OF "THE POETRY REVIEW"

It may not have been noticed by every reader, but there was a passage in the May-June issue which reflected great courage and even daring, on the part of the Editor.

It demonstrated two things; fidelity to the poetic ideal, and the supreme importance of the REVIEW as a champion of liberty of thought and freedom of opinion.

The passage in question occurred in Mr. Nicholas Moore's very fine Essay "Form and the Work in Hand."

Incidentally, Mr. Moore is to be complimented upon an extremely clever and penetrating study.

It was when I came to the paragraph which dealt such a blow at John Masefield that I received an acute personal shock.

Here, please excuse a digression because of an intense admiration for Masefield. I rank him with the highest in our language. His great early poems "The Widow in Bye Street," "The Ever-lasting Mercy," "Daffodil Fields," and, above all, "Dauber," are masterpieces that will live as long as our language deserves to live. "Nan" may claim to be the finest English tragedy since Shelley's "Ceuci," and "Pompey the Great" must certainly take high rank. It is a disgrace to this country that "Nan" is not given more often in our commercially hag-ridden theatre. These opinions may be heretical, but they are "mine own." I only wish we could have some new poems of the masculine strength of Masefield's early work. One poem of the deep gripping power

of "The Widow in Bye Street" would be worth all the effeminate whinings of our intellectually sour and musically dead youth. If our young men would read Masefield's "Dauber" with understanding detached from their feeble egotism they would perhaps feel poetry for the first time in their lives. We should also be spared the steady and dreary drip of a posing disillusion that issues from one vacuum only to rush into another.

It has been said that a Poet Laureate may be anything or everything but a poet. We all remember Johnson's famous lines :—

"Augustus still survives in Maro's strain
And Spenser's verse prolongs Eliza's reign,
Great George's Acts let tuneful Cibber sing,
For Nature formed the poet for the King."

Another George had John Pye, about whom Byron said :—

"Better to err with Pope
Than shine with Pye."

Since Pye's day we have had some curious examples, but John Masefield is in a different category. This choice was perhaps the best thing Ramsay Macdonald did as Premier.

Not having read the poem that Mr. Moore criticises so sweepingly an opinion cannot be formed as to the justness or otherwise of the criticism. This is not the point at issue. The thought that emerges is that THE POETRY REVIEW occupies a position very little lower than the high alter of the Muse. The exalted shall be of low degree if they fall from excellence, and this is splendidly right. If we look elsewhere what a different picture we see.

We have a Press that is so submerged in commercial baseness that poetry has no chance to be heard or read unless it is accompanied by a name with a publicity label attached to it. The veriest fustian is published by the great respectable newspapers if it represents the drivellings of an unemployable peer, or a decaying dean, or a drowsy don. They once tumbled over each other to print the ravings of Ezra Pound who has since become the Lord Haw Haw to Mussolini. They would rather pay a high price for the rubbish of a well-known dullard than accept a fine poem as a gift from an unknown author. The same journals prate about the way they support Art, when the only Art they know is the huckster art of the market place. Verily No. 33 Portman Square should become the Burlington House of Poetry if we ever do have a Royal Academy for the greatest of the Arts.

Slough, Bucks. H. L. SENIOR.

THE R.A.P. NOMINATIONS

Perhaps I may be permitted to remark that it is not at all strange, as some of your correspondents seem to think, that I left out a few possible names from my possible list of R.A.P.s. I never intended to select the whole body myself, nor do I necessarily approve of the selection of many of those I did name : it is for everyone to record his own vote, when the time comes.

On reconsideration, I think Mr. Arthur Row is quite right that only poets should be R.A.P.s. On the other hand, I think it is slightly presumptuous to say the least of it, to assume that our country can at any one moment in its history, point to as many as forty living poets of really first-class merit. It seems to me, that twenty or even less is as much as we can expect. And, despite Mr. Leaver's belief to the contrary, it does

seem to me essential that the R.A.P.s should be first-class. If not, the publication of "esoteric and third-rate synthetic verse," which he deplores, would only become all the more prevalent: it might even creep into the Academy's own volume.

As for Mr. Percy Colson, if, as he says, Lord Alfred Douglas has really forgotten so much about the art of poetry, it would certainly be better not to select him. We don't want R.A.P.s who have "forgotten" what they used to know and think. However, no doubt Mr. Colson is slandering Lord Alfred—but goodness knows why! My quite innocent list of possibles was not meant to provoke an argument of "personalities."

Finally, I do not see why Lancashire's trippers should not appreciate Gray's "Elegy." I do not see what Lancashire's trippers have got to do either with poets who worship tube trains or with Mr. Eliot. (Mr. Eliot, I believe, worships God). And I suspect that the actor in Mr. Senior's anecdote would not know the meaning of many of Shakespeare's lines. This being so, his conclusion seems to be a most brilliant *non sequitur*. Perhaps it was meant to be funny.

But I mention this letter, too, as an example of the sort of bigotry that the R.A.P. would have to guard against: if it is true that "To the present generation there need be no meaning in anything, so long as there are plenty of loudspeakers," we had better give up all idea of an R.A.P. However, perhaps we can trust to Mr. Christmas Humphreys' advocacy to see that there is one! Or must all the loud-speaking be left to the politicians and the disgruntled critics like Mr. Senior? I hope not.

Chesterton Road, Cambridge. NICHOLAS MOORE.

Congratulations, the new cover of the REVIEW is most artistic, and the contents better than ever in spite of war-time difficulties. I agree with Mr. Percy Colson over the question of a Royal Academy of Poetry. The R.A.P.s being drawn from such widely different schools, would find great difficulty in agreeing over the merits of the poems submitted, and even if the Board Meetings did not resemble a poetic Tower of Babel, the annual book of verse most certainly would.

Speaking broadly, we have the traditionals, the Georgians, the pseudo-moderns—Georgians who have shed the capital letter at the commencement of each line, and, like elderly ladies donning slacks, clothed themselves in unconvincing modernity, and the authentic moderns. From the schools, each with its many branches and cul-de-sacs—if such a mixing of metaphors may be excused—I fail to see how anything but feuds and disunity could be produced.

I therefore suggest that an R.A.P. should be formed in which two separate and independent Boards known as the "Traditional" and "Modern" might consider the work submitted; the poet sending in his verse would himself decide into which class his poems fell. Borderline poetry, i.e., Georgian, to be judged as traditional, as its growth and expansion has long ceased. Thus, much that is neither fish, flesh or fowl would be eliminated. The likelihood of the R.A.P.s coming to an amicable agreement would be more likely. And we should be saved by the two separate annual volumes, from the possible incongruity of finding Lord Dunsany jostled by W. H. Auden.

Bournemouth. ELLODE COLLINS.

THE POETRY REVIEW seems to me to be the only journal still consistently maintaining the beauty, sanity and dignity of English verse.

Englefield Green. E. B. W. CHAPPELOW, F.R.A.S., F.R.S.A.

THE POETRY LOVERS' FELLOWSHIP

THE PREMIUM EDITOR'S REPORT

The most remarkable contributions are those by E. W. Edmonds. Readers of The Poetry Review know that this writer is an able experimenter in modern methods, and these poems show a great deal of variety. There is a blend of thought with intense emotion, as well as notable beauty of form.

It did not seem possible this time, any more than it often has before, to give a sole Premium to one writer. There are three who have sent very good sonnets or other lyrical poems of traditional form. They cannot be passed over. These are T. E. Casson (Ulverston), Arthur Lynnford-Smith (Wanstead) and Dorothy Trail (Vancouver), all of whom are congratulated.

Amongst those "Highly Commended," George Price must be especially praised for his poem "Desertion."

Highly Commended

Raymond Bourne, Thetford;
Pauline Emeric, Taplow;
H. W. Harding, Twickenham;
Christine L. Henderson, Montreal;
Redcliffe McKie, Brighton;
George Price, Hoylake;
Harry Sefton, Lytham;
Ronald Westbrook, New Hythe.

Commended

Elizabeth Barrett, Seaford;
R. E. Boulton, Winscombe;
E. B. W. Chappelow, Egham;
Alice E. Collinge, Harwood;
Ellodë Collins, Bournemouth;
A. A. Cordwell, Worthing;
Eileen Dix, Beaconsfield;
K. E. Fuller, Leamington;
Gladys Hunkin, St. Ives;
F. Jennings, Porloch;
R. E. Leaver, Kelvedon;
J. Sackville Martin, Leigh;
Beryl Morgan, Horley.
G. S. Oddy, Ryde;
Ierne Ormsly, Thurgoland;
Frances Pritchard, Bournemouth;
Phoebe Rayner, Rivington;
Derek B. Reade, West Africa;
Roberta Shuttleworth, Guildford;
Hilda M. Slade, Worthing;
D. E. Christine Tomlin, Dunstable;
Annie M. Waters, Chepstow;
H. Newcome Wright, London, W.;
Edith M. Walker, Bournemouth;
Juliet Young, Vancouver;

Contributors should note that this long continued feature is not affected by the present somewhat erratic publication of The Poetry Review.

Mr. A. H. Duff (Teignmouth), sends "a Metrical Monstrosity inspired by a phrase of P. E. Leaver's letter on the question of a Royal Academy of Poetry. Please accept my apologies for butting into a controversy which is no direct concern of mine (*not* being a professional poet!), but it seems to me that any attempt to establish a R.A.P. will inevitably weaken the resistance of those that *are*, to the ever present double menace of fashion and convention.

"—providing, of course, this annual flowering of the nation's muse was such as to inspire and refresh the public, rather than depress, enrage and bewilder it."

P. E. Leaver, on the annual book of verse of *A Royal Academy of Poetry*, The Poetry Review, May-June, 1942.

Poet: Come, let us depress, bewilder and enrage the public;
—they are such dull unspiritual people
that it does them good to squirm!
Come, let us depress, bewilder and enrage the public;
—let us set up a poet's perfect, platonic Republic,

and let us air all our thoughts on a steeple,
far, far above the common human worm,
who is passionately attached to conventional mediocrity,
and who fights to preserve it . . .
Come, let us depress, bewilder and enrage the public;
—they deserve it!

MUSE: All things, child, depend one upon another;
life on death, truth upon honesty, and tears on crying;
—and I cannot seriously contemplate a Republic full of passionate poets
without contemplating also the desirability of dying!
Truth, child, means acquaintance with dishonesty;
living, child, means a taking part in life,
and therefore it is true
that the more, child, you depress, bewilder and enrage the public,
the more the public will enrage, bewilder and depress *you!*

ROBERTA SHUTTLEWORTH (Guildford), writes: "In the current POETRY REVIEW Marguerite Edgelow invites ideas of competitors on vital aspects of human existence, and suggests they should first express their personal philosophy on the theme of Time—an interesting idea. Strangely enough, I submitted my reasoning on this point for the June Premium, after reading one of J. W. Dunne's books on the subject.

It may be it was rather more of a discourse on a subject than a true poem, and in any case, I have pruned it and added to it since then, and here is my finished thought in case you should care to use it in this series. Margaret Gregson's lovely poem, "Escape from Time" embraces the same theory, so too, I believe, do Priestley's time-plays, and T. S. Eliot's poems, and it is also gripping the imagination of painters. I think it is the key to a depth of thought much needed by many in these days when war is severing so many earthly connections.

IT IS HE THAT SITTETH UPON THE CIRCLE OF THE EARTH

Before, behind, beside, below, above,
Dark night possesses all my vision's span,
Yet, somewhere, at this overshadowed hour,
The sun's clear rays are waking other lives
To the pulsing climax of their loveliness;
And, somewhere, in the circle's compass, I
Am young and beautiful and all receptive
As when my eyes first watched the opening rose
That soon their three-dimensional gaze beheld,
In seeming dissolution, vanish from sight.

All that has lived still lives, will ever live,
For Alpha and Omega meet in One
Whose mystic death, in human time, once proved
The Omnipresence of Eternity
True Time does not pass on to age, except
Within the finite mind that once conceived
Sin's contradiction of immortal Truth—
The lie that dared assume power to survive
Outside the circle of the rainbow's light,
In linear limits of mortality.

"Before Abraham was, I am"—the Almighty said.
For transcience is the progeny of sin,
The immutable spirit knows no boundary,
It can recall the vivid Past at will
And in the deep prophetic notes of dream
Reveal the Future hours intuitively . . .
For if the adoring dog, with lesser instinct, howls
When his poor master's flesh vibrates in death,
Though Continents divide him from the scene,
Cannot man's love embrace God's spacelessness ?

When death unfurls the Past within the arc
That holds the Present and the Future hours
—Coincident and not successively—
We shall perceive a sameness and a change . . .
For did not sin walk contrary to Light,
And must it not in darkness lose itself
Till nothing but the God in man survives
—Love's true intention, not the crooked deed—
And we behold the world that God foresaw,
Man's soul desired, and Time and Space fulfilled ?

ROBERTA SHUTTLEWORTH.

A DIPLOMAT ON MODERN AMERICAN POETRY

The HON. LEWIS EINSTEIN, former U.S.A. Minister to Czechoslovakia, presiding at the reading of American poetry on June 5th said :

"I feel honoured by this invitation to address a Society which brings together those who cherish one of the oldest of the arts. I feel even more honoured at this tribute paid to four American poets who differ from each other in the way that human minds will always differ. Perhaps it is worthy of note that the besetting sin of modern standardization with the cast uniformity of the die should not have stamped its dreaded monotony upon the makers of verse. Whatever be their faults or their weaknesses, no one can accuse these poets of being shaped in one pattern like those rhymesters of the still unmechanized 18th century, who blindly cast their verse in the same mould.

"I do not know if any of the poets—Robert Frost, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Vachel Lindsay and Carl Sandburg—selected for to-day's readings are great poets. Perhaps my judgment suffers from the sclerosis of years and an inability to adjust personal tastes to newer standards, for I still keep an incurable fondness for the old. To the modern poet, however, the mere vicinity of Bacchus and his pards seems artificial and rarified and he prefers a flight in which he can hear the whistle of the locomotive or the chugging of the plane. The poets of to-day have the rare talent to extract a romantic interest from drab and even ugly surroundings just as the painter Utrillo finds interest in the dull homeliness of a French village street. I will not, however, attempt to lay down any criteria of taste or of merit for these vary with every age and the tests of creative imagination can be very differently applied. Also one feels humble when one recalls how great poets have made some odd mistakes in their judgments of other poets. Shelley felt convinced that Byron was the outstanding bard of his age and Byron, full of admiration for Shelley's generous heart, cared nothing for his poetry and far preferred the stilted rhymes of Crabbe and Rogers.

"Nor will I try like a surveyor to indicate at what particular point American

poetry breaks off from British. Some of it is certainly very different in language and in form and some differs only in spirit, and some isn't really different at all. American verse is rather like the Delta of the Nile after that great river has run its long course from the distant mountains of Abyssinia to reach the sea through many mouths. To-day only four of these mouths concern us and if a choice has to be made, none could be better by their varying range than the four who have been selected for the reading.

"The first, Edna St. Vincent Millay, keeps up the great tradition of English verse as if she were herself a spiritual daughter of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, who utilizes themes which have always been the themes of poetry and dresses these with skill and art and passion. I do not know what selection will be made in reading from her verse but hope this will include a really great early poem of hers called "Renascence."

"Next comes Robert Frost, who writes with cold precision and characteristic understatement of his cherished New England countryside. He writes about farms in the New Hampshire hills and his verse is filled with understanding and the observation of nature which means real love of the soil. But I do not find that the note he strikes is original or that he does more than continue in an American setting the long line of English country poets. Perhaps I do not do him justice.

"I shall not attempt to appraise Vachel Lindsay's poetic significance. There is something in him of the revivalist and of the missionary and the jazz leader, but occasionally he writes passages of real poetry which always surprise and delight. Deliberately he has tried to restore to verse its original popular appeal and make of it something which can be sung as well as spoken. He is noisy and often crude, half ballad maker and half vaudeville artist putting on a show, but always giving it a flavour of his own. Some may perhaps discern in him the forerunner of a great new movement, others may deride him as a clown stepping out of a circus. We need not try to judge, only to listen.

"Last of all comes Carl Sandburg, the son of a Swedish emigrant and spiritually the son of Walt Whitman, who writes with a mystical and religious faith in democracy. Recently he completed a monumental life of Lincoln in four great volumes, each of between 600 and 700 pages closely packed with facts assiduously collected in the way a medieval chronicler might have done. This life is impressive by the sheer mass of his material—somewhat uncritically heaped together with little or no attempt to sift or weigh it. Also, in his verse Sandburg reminds one of the mystical religious poets of the Middle Ages who were intoxicated by an almost physical craving for God. His religion is American democracy and he discovers spiritual values hidden deep under the dirt and dross of Chicago alleys and slaughter-houses. He does not attempt to palliate or explain all that is hideous on the surface. He admits this freely, but beneath he sees burning a purer light. There is an elemental but sophisticated primitivism in Sandburg with a passionate Americanism which he discovers in all its varied manifestations with outcasts and gunmen, misery and crimes, but also with something much finer, something which glows beneath. I think of Sandburg in connection with a story of an incident which took place in a Nazi concentration camp where a Catholic priest and a Jewish rabbi were ordered as a further humiliation to clean out the latrines and while they were engaged in this a Nazi guard stood over them and shouted in derision: 'Where is now your God?' The priest gazing at the sky said, 'He is there' and the rabbi standing up amid the filth answered, 'He is here.' Carl Sandburg sees the flame of American democracy burning even in the deepest pit."

LEWIS EINSTEIN.